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THE PHENOMENON OF RECURRENCE
IN THE NARRATIVE WORKS OF WILHELM CONTESSA

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read,
and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for
acceptance, a thesis entitled THE PHENOMENON OF RECURRENCE
IN THE NARRATIVE WORKS OF WILHELM CONTESSA submitted by
Adrian D. W. O'Sullivan in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

Wilhelm Contessa is a forgotten writer of late German Romanticism who, whilst closely bound (as a member of the Serapionsbrüder) to the style and literary interests of E.T.A. Hoffmann, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué and others, reveals in his narrative works many anti-Romantic tendencies. In this thesis his life and his works are first examined in chronological sequence. In the second chapter it is shown that one particular pattern of development based upon the daemonic drive of a male character is reproduced throughout most of his narrative works. The third chapter examines certain recurrent themes and motifs found in his tales. The concluding remarks contain an indication of the directions future, now highly expedient research on Contessa could take.

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INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to his comparative study of the works of Wilhelm Contessa and E.T.A. Hoffmann, Gerhard Pankalla says of Meyer's book, the only existing full-length monograph on Contessa:¹ "die Besprechungen dieses Buches vermissen eine fruchtbare Kritik, eine eingehende Betrachtung der Zusammenhänge, eine zusammenfassende Erledigung einzelner Probleme . . ."² His complaint of some thirty years ago might well be applied even today to any of the secondary literature on Contessa. Even Pankalla's own work fails to avoid the limitations he himself deplores in Meyer's study. In this thesis I have undertaken what is probably the first attempt ever made to isolate Contessa from his literary peers and to consider his narrative works on their own merit (however dubious that might be) in relation to one another. Although his is a comparative study of ambitious proportions, Pankalla does make brief, sporadic lunges at specific problems in Contessa's works, but his view can hardly be described as comprehensive, for he is concerned always to relate Contessa's tales to Hoffmann's rather than to themselves.

I make no apologies for the disproportionate length of Chapter I. Since Hans Meyer's inaugural dissertation, published before the First World War, which is irritatingly unsystematic and often quite superficial in approach, no one has attempted conscientiously to relate Contessa's works to his

¹Hans P. Meyer, Die Brüder Contessa. Ihr Leben und ihre Werke (Berlin, 1906).

²Karl Wilhelm Contessa und E.T.A. Hoffmann. Motiv- und Form-Beziehungen im Werk zweier Romantiker (Würzburg, 1938), p. 4.

somewhat uneventful life. By deploying his literature chronologically, I have tried to throw into sharp relief its developmental aspect. Additionally a few misleading errors by earlier scholars are corrected. Also random problems not entirely within the scope of a study of recurrence are discussed, if only because they are central to an understanding of Contessa's works and have never been approached before. Above all I have tried, as throughout this thesis, to lay the preliminary ground-work of systematic classification which should have been undertaken long ago. I would emphasize that this thesis merely attempts to classify, seldom to interpret. Until such preliminary tasks of organization have been completed, the interpretation of Contessa's work is likely to remain as pedestrian as it has been hitherto. Unless scholars first come to understand fully the mechanics of how Contessa pieced together the corpus of his work, then they will be no better able to become sensitive to his purpose, than to assess him fairly in relation to his contemporaries. He has been sadly neglected: the mere necessity for an introductory survey-chapter of such size in this thesis is, in a sense, a measure of that neglect.

I have not attempted to summarize the plots of Contessa's narratives. I have assumed that the reader has access either to the works themselves or to H. W. Hewett-Thayer's article in Germanic Review,¹ where some excellent summaries are given. However, it is necessary to exercise caution when reading this article, since it contains some careless errors partic-

¹Harvey W. Hewett-Thayer, "The Romanticism of Contessa," Germanic Review, XVIII (1943), 24-35.

ularly on pp. 28-29.¹

The edition used throughout, despite its poor quality, was that published by Howald one year after Contessa's death, chosen here for its comprehensiveness, its chronological organization and for the fact that it was the edition used by Pankalla. Georg von Maassen's edition of the narrative works (published in 1922) is of better quality and perhaps more suitable for the general reader. Both editions are to be found in the University of Alberta library.²

Just as Pankalla's lament prompted me to undertake this "eingehende Betrachtung der Zusammenhänge," I hope sincerely that my thesis may in turn induce others either to challenge my arguments or to extend them. Whichever course they choose, I trust that they will work, as I have, to foster the memory of Wilhelm Contessa. And that is a worthy cause.

¹The major errors are: (a) the view of one of several songs in Der Todesengel as a leitmotif, which it clearly is not; (b) the "Fremder Jäger" of Der schwarze See is referred to as "der schwarze Jäger," a character in another tale; (c) Wolfgang is named Wolfram (Die weisse Rose); (d) the white rose is confused with the Alpenrose from which it is emphatically distinguished in Muhme Tinel's legend; (e) the rose is said to bloom on the night before Assumption, whilst Himmelfahrtstag in the story clearly means Ascension (i.e. Christihimmelfahrt, not Mariahimmelfahrt); (f) Countess Rovero is misread as Countess Novero; (g) the writer seemingly knows nothing of Helmuth Rogge's important discovery (1925) that Fouqué, not Hitzig contributed to the Roman en quatre (see below, p. 35).

²See Bibliography.

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF WILHELM CONTESSA

Karl Wilhelm Salice-Contessa¹ was born on 19 August 1777 in Hirschberg im Riesengebirge² into a highly respected and extremely wealthy merchant family of doubtful Italian extraction.³ The fine arts were prominent in Wilhelm's childhood environment. The Contessas, enthusiastic and energetic patrons of all the arts, had been closely associated with the Gottschedian Dichterkreis of Hirschberg since its inception at the beginning of the century: their sumptuous home was always open to other dilettante merchants of the region and to any poets, artists, musicians or scholars visiting Silesia. Musical soirées were held with regularity: young

¹As might be expected with a neglected writer, inconsistency in nomenclature is widespread. Although Contessa himself, his contemporaries and most nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars spell his first name Carl, the form shown above is currently favoured (e.g. by Gerhard Pankalla, Hans Heckel and by recent editors of Goedeke). However, since Contessa never socially used his first name and was never referred to as Salice-Contessa during his lifetime, it would be both correct and less cumbersome to refer to the writer simply as Wilhelm Contessa.

²Now Polish Silesia.

³Exhaustive, but fruitless efforts were made by Meyer to trace the family's origin (see Hans Meyer, Die Brüder Contessa. Ihr Leben und ihre Werke [Berlin, 1906], pp. 12-15. Subsequently referred to as Meyer). Even Contessa's close friend Julius Hitzig, after direct reference to members of the family, was unable to clarify the mystery surrounding the family's immigration and the significance of the surname Salice (see J.E. Hitzig's obituary in Neuer Nekrolog der Deutschen, ed. Fr. A. Schmidt [Ilmenau, 1825], III, 600-601).

Wilhelm became a proficient violinist long before he received his (belated) formal education.¹

After the death of his father in 1793, Wilhelm's brother Jakob² assumed responsibility for his education: in 1794, aged seventeen, Wilhelm entered the Pädagogium der Frankeschen Stiftungen in Halle. Soon overcoming his initial backwardness, he soared through all the classes of the Gymnasium in three years, becoming extremely popular with both his colleagues and his mentors and, like his illustrious compatriot Andreas Gryphius, acquiring a formidable reputation as leading actor in the school plays. It was at Halle that Contessa met Ernst von Houwald,³ who was to become his lifelong friend and who has given us a clear picture of the youthful Contessa at Halle:

¹See Meyer, pp. 12-15. Cf. Hans Heckel, "Die Brüder Contessa," Schlesische Lebensbilder (Breslau, 1931), IV, pp. 302-303; Ernst von Houwald, "Einige Bruchstücke aus C.W. Contessas Leben," W.G. Beckers Taschenbuch zum geselligen Vergnügen, ed. Kind (1828), p. 214; Gerhard Pankalla, Karl Wilhelm Contessa und E.T.A. Hoffmann. Motiv- und Form-Beziehungen im Werk zweier Romantiker (Würzburg, 1938), p. 6. Subsequently referred to as Heckel, Houwald and Pankalla respectively.

²Christian Jakob Salice-Contessa (1767-1825), never himself more than a literary dilettante of mediocre talent, after a period of imprisonment for revolutionary political activities, inherited the family business and proved himself an extremely able administrator both in commerce and in municipal affairs. With Wilhelm, ten years his junior, he enjoyed a warm, if hardly intimate relationship. He died only three months after his younger brother. See Meyer, pp. 15-55, et passim. For a less detailed study, see Heckel, pp. 303-304.

³Christoph Ernst von Houwald (1778-1845) became, with Zacharias Werner and Adolf Müllner, one of the leading exponents of the popular fate-drama. His two best known pieces are Das Bild and Der Leuchtturm (1821). He was responsible for the publication of Contessa's complete works in 1826.

Wir drei¹ bezogen ein Zimmer; Contessa war der Älteste, und bei weitem der Lebens-Erfahrenste, . . . so merkte man ihm doch keinen besonders angestregten Fleiss an; es war vielmehr, als ob er blos erst zu leben gelernt habe, und das bisher ihm fremdgebliebene Gebiet der Wissenschaften von dem Lebenskundigen nunmehr um desto leichter durchschritten werden könne. Sein Körper besass nicht weniger Gewandtheit, als sein Geist; er war wohlgewachsen und in allen Leibesübungen geschickt, zeigte auch grosse Fertigkeit im Zeichnen und in der Musik. Schon hier auf der Schule wurde manches von ihm gedichtet; mehreres davon ist in den letzten Band seiner Schriften aufgenommen,² besonders aber offenbarte sich hier schon sein bedeutendes dramatisches Talent.³

In 1798, Contessa enrolled in the law faculty of the University of Erlangen where he passed more than a year of indolence, dividing his time between acquiring a mastery of the violin, acquainting himself quite unsystematically with literature at large and enjoying the company of women. A few love poems, to which Meyer attributes "eine rührende Unbeholfenheit," date from this period (April 1798 to May 1800).⁴ It was in Erlangen too that Contessa met Hitzig, the friend and biographer of E. T. A. Hoffmann;⁵ it was the same Hitzig who would later introduce the two writers to one another in Berlin and who would, with Contessa and Koreff, share the rare distinction of being one of Hoffmann's Serapionsbrüder.

Contessa returned to Halle in 1800, enrolling at the University and

¹Contessa, Houwald and Barthels.

²See C.W. Contessa, Schriften, ed. E. von Houwald (Leipzig, 1826), IX, pp. 3 ff. Subsequently referred to as Schriften, together with vol. no.

³Houwald, pp. 215-216.

⁴Schriften, IX, pp. 5-22.

⁵Julius Eduard Hitzig (1780-1849) later became Kriminalrat and publisher: the chief organizer of the literary circle around Hoffmann.

rejoining his schoolfriend Houwald. At this time Contessa met and fell deeply in love with his future wife Johanna Jahn, causing something of a furor amongst his friends, who felt a cobbler's¹ daughter to be far beneath his station. It was probably their scorn and his mother's overt opposition towards his relationship with Hannchen which prompted Contessa, on his brother's advice, to undertake a journey to Paris,² by way of Switzerland, in the same year (1800). Here he seriously hoped to be cured of his love for Hannchen,³ but various circumstances, not least the death of his disapproving mother in 1801, removed all obstacles to their union and, in the summer of 1802, they were married in virtual secrecy. Immediately, the couple left Halle to take up permanent residence in Weimar. Contessa never resumed his legal studies.

Several lyric poems date from this period, nearly all accurately reflecting Contessa's hopes and fears for Hannchen, his violent oscillations between extreme optimism and the blackest depths of despair. Of these lyrics, Fahr hin (October 1800) demonstrates most successfully the polarized flux of the poet's emotions:

¹Houwald, who knew Hannchen personally, states that her father was a shoemaker, whilst all subsequent scholars (i.e. Meyer, Heckel, et al.) assert that he was a baker.

²Contessa's first Novelle, Manon (1803), is set in the Paris of 1800.

³Houwald discusses at length Contessa's relationship with Hannchen and the circumstances surrounding the Paris visit in Houwald, pp. 229-245.

Was rührst du wieder mit der kalten Hand
 Du ödes Leben an das heisse Herz?
 Zerreissest hart das süsse Band,
 Das Täuschung lindernd um die Augen wand,
 Und rufst zurück den langverbannten Schmerz?

So ist auf ewig dieser Lenz verblüht?
 Erloschen dieser Liebe mildes Licht?
 Die Sehnsucht, die im Busen glüht,
 Die stumme Thräne, die dem Aug' entflieht,
 Dies alles rührt dich, kaltes Leben, nicht?

So nimm ihn denn, den süssen Frieden hin,
 Der kurze Zeit mein Herz so sanft gewiegt,
 Fahr' hin, du holde Täuscherin!
 Leb ewig wohl; das Leben hat gesiegt!

Im Busen regt sich kein Verlangen mehr,
 Mit Freuden trät' ich aus dem Leben aus.
 Vergebens blick' ich um mich her:
 Der Lenz hat abgeblüht; die Welt ist leer;
 Und Friede wohnt nur im dunkeln Haus.¹

But, nearly a year later, Contessa appears already to have been convinced that he and Hannchen would eventually be united in happiness:

. . . Ich kam von einer weiten Reise
 Und bald vollendet war mein Lauf. . . .

. . . Und sieh! im Kreis von hohen Bäumen
 Da sass, auf einer Bank von Moos,
 Ein junges Weib in stillen Träumen,
 Ein holdes Kind auf ihrem Schoos. . . .

Da nimm, sprachst Du, aus meinen Händen
 Dies Kind des Schmerzens und der Lust!
 Ich nahm das Kind aus Deinen Händen,
 Und schloss Dich selig an die Brust.²

Wilhelm and Hannchen were intensely happy together in Weimar, but this happiness was to be as short-lived as it was fierce: Hannchen died in premature childbirth, less than eight months after their marriage. Contessa was utterly shattered by her death, which together

¹Schriften, IX, pp. 32-33.

²Der Traum (August 1801). Schriften, IX, pp. 82-84.

with his apparent tendency towards laziness,¹ served to hinder greatly what creative energy he possessed. It was Houwald's fear that precisely such a destruction of sheer literary talent might ensue which led him to take an unduly harsh view of Contessa's immediate withdrawal into a life of total seclusion:

Contessa war jetzt zwar wieder frei, und hätte jede neue Laufbahn beginnen können, allein er vermochte sich nicht loszureissen, blieb in den Händen der Verwandten seiner verstorbenen Frau, die in keiner Hinsicht für ihn passten, heirathete späterhin wieder ein Mädchen aus diesem Kreise, und gelangte so niemals zu einer erfreulichen Selbstständigkeit.²

These are insensitive words indeed from one who had earlier read the following heart-rending statement in a letter from his dearest friend:

Dies Niemanden mehr angehören, dies isoliert stehen ist fürchterlich.³

Meyer⁴ actually upbraids Houwald for failing to understand Contessa's grief, but then he himself, finding Contessa still aloof and sad some three months later, proceeds to commit equally glaring errors of insensitivity in the face of Contessa's apparent unproductiveness:

Das zurückgezogene Leben, welches Wilhelm aus Bequemlichkeit geführt hatte, setzte er nun fort aus Melancholie.⁵

That the feverish intellectual and artistic activity of Goethe's Weimar completely passed Contessa by, that he never during his four years'

¹Houwald, p. 240 (" . . . sein grosser Hang zur Bequemlichkeit.").

²Houwald, p. 241.

³Contessa's letter to Houwald of April 1803 in Denkmäler dienstvoller Deutschen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts (Leipzig, 1829), V, pp. 89 ff.

⁴Meyer, p. 69.

⁵Ibid.

residence made any attempt to gain admission to literary circles, that he appeared rarely in society only for performances of Schiller's dramas or for brief visits to Houwald at Straupitz and to his brother in Hirschberg, all can be attributed to the complete breakdown he experienced after the death of Hannchen. Yet such seclusion does not imply complete inactivity, as Houwald et al. might have us believe. Between 1802 and 1805, Contessa busied himself not only with his library and rock-collection, but also found time to write his first three plays and two stories, as well as to compose some of the most sombre lyrics he ever wrote, imbued with the death-wish which was to become a characteristic behavioural motif in the bereaved heroes of his narrative works:¹

Wie alte Freunde kommen aus dem Hain
Des Waldhorns Töne her zu mir gegangen;
Mit ihnen ziehen Sehnsucht und Verlangen
In meine Brust aufs neue ein. . . .

Und kommt der Frühling wieder zu uns her,
Werd' ich nach meiner Blume trauernd fragen,
Und trauernd wird die Nachtigall mir sagen:
Die süsse Blume ist nicht mehr!

Die Erde nahm und lässt sie nimmer los;
Kein Sehnen, kein Verlangen bringt sie wieder.
Dum schlag ich flehend meine Augen nieder:
O nimm mich auch in deinen Schooss!²

Contessa's contribution to German drama merits scant discussion. Whilst his first two plays, Der Brief ohne Adresse (1802)³ and Der Gelehrte (1803),⁴ were little more than free translations from French

¹See below, pp. 53 ff.

²Hannchen (March 1803). Schriften, IX, pp. 97-98.

³Adaptation of Fabre d'Eglantine's L'intrigue epistolaire (1791). Schriften, I, pp. 1-190.

⁴Translation of Néricault Destouches' Le philosophe marié, ou le mari honteux de l'être (1727). Schriften, I, pp. 203-320.

originals, the third, Das Räthsel (1805),¹ an original one-act comedy, enjoyed enormous success during Contessa's lifetime. After being premièred in Weimar under Goethe's direction on 18 September 1805, it was performed in Weimar alone twenty-eight times by 1817 and seventy-eight times in Berlin by 1844.² Goethe himself appears to have thought well of Contessa; he writes in a letter to Kirms dated 27 June 1810:

"Überlegen Sie doch, ob das Stückchen von Contessa sogleich ausgetheilt und . . . einstudirt werden könne. Dieser Autor verdient, dass man ihm gefällig sey" ³ But Ludwig Tieck, who initially saw Contessa as the possible revolutionary saviour of the German comedy from its moribund subservience to French ideals, could not share Goethe's enthusiasm when it became clear that Contessa was never going to break free from the ubiquitous influence of the French comedy:

Immerdar ist das Lustspiel die schwache Seite unserer Literatur gewesen, immer haben ungünstige Verhältnisse aller Art die Ausbildung desselben gehindert, und in unseren Tagen darf es uns wieder leid tun, dass ein so feines Talent, wie das des Contessa sich nicht ganz mit Begeisterung und fleissigem Studium der Ausarbeitung wahrer Komödien hingegen hat; mich dünkt, er hätte

¹Schriften, II, pp. 141-204.

²Heckel, p. 305.

³Sophienausgabe, IV. Abth., XXI, p. 336. My italics. In Goethe's diaries there are records of his attendance at eleven performances of Contessa's plays between 1807 and 1815. Contessa is also mentioned in Über das deutsche Theater (Sophienausgabe, XL, pp. 98-99) and in miscellaneous correspondence. For details, see Sophienausgabe, XV (Register), p. 250; XXX(Register), p. 28; LIV(Register), p. 188.

alles, was dazu gehört, wenn er sich die Sache nicht zu leicht machte und nicht zu sehr in der schon ausgefahrenen Strasse bliebe.¹

Hans Meyer's explanation of why Contessa fell prey to the triviality of the contemporary German comedy is plausible, since Contessa, though doubtless perceiving what needed to be done, lacked the necessary dynamic esprit to supersede the models he used:

Wenn sich Carl Wilhelm Contessa nun neuerdings bemüht hat . . . für die deutsche Bühne etwas zu leisten, so kam er mit dieser Tätigkeit um mehr als ein Jahrzehnt zu spät. Sein Wesen wurzelte doch zu tief im 18. Jahrhundert, als dass er für die Richtung, in welcher sich ein neues deutsches Konversationslustspiel hätte gestalten lassen, das rechte Verständnis hätte haben können.²

The two stories of the Weimar period, Manon (1803)³ and Der Instinkt (1804),⁴ are contrasted in form. Manon, probably reflecting one of Contessa's

¹Ludwig Tieck, Kritische Schriften (Leipzig, 1853), III, 216. Quoted by Meyer, pp. 77-78 and also by H.W. Hewett-Thayer, "The Romanticism of Contessa," Germanic Review, XVIII (1943), 34 (subsequently referred to as Hewett-Thayer). This paper contains (24-26) a sensible assessment of Contessa's significance as a dramatist.

²Meyer, pp. 76-77.

³Schriften, I, pp. 191-202. First publ. in Dramatische Spiele und Erzählungen der Brüder Contessa (Hirschberg, 1811), I. Also in: Taschenbuch der Liebe und Freundschaft (1816), pp. 115-195; Erzählungen (Dresden, 1819), I; Kleine Geschichten und Hoffmanniana, ed. G. von Maassen (Munich, 1922), pp. 249-258 (subsequently referred to as KGH); ed. Walther Killy, Zeichen der Zeit. Ein deutsches Lesebuch (Berlin and Frankfurt, 1962), I/2, pp. 403-407.

⁴Schriften, II, pp. 1-68. First publ. in Dramatische Spiele und Erzählungen der Brüder Contessa (Hirschberg, 1811), I. Also in: Erzählungen (Dresden, 1819), II; KGH, pp. 1-57.

actual experiences in Paris three years earlier, is a deeply moving tragedy set against the background of the Revolution and its after-effects; it is a genuine Novelle, shaped concisely and objectively with a rare mastery of literary form.¹ Der Instinkt, on the other hand, is an unsymmetrical jumble of loosely connected episodes, mostly humorous, motivated primarily by the confusion of identities surrounding a pair of identical twin sisters.² But what links these stories and actually places them cogently and harmoniously in the overall context of Contessa's development as a writer are precisely those elements which seem to have escaped his critics' attention. Hitherto it has been customary to dismiss both Manon and Der Instinkt as essentially non-Romantic first efforts, thus inherently postulating the occurrence of some colossal metamorphosis between the writing of the first stories and the conception of the undeniably Romantic Meister Dietrich some five years later. Heckel, Hewett-Thayer and Georg von Maassen³ all regard these early narratives as more or less un-Romantic and uncharacteristic; Hans Meyer at least sees superficial Romantic elements in Der Instinkt:

Das Doppelgängerproblem, das also hier angeschnitten wird, weist auf eine beginnende romantische Strömung hin. Auch sonst zeigen sich Spuren romantischen Aufputzes. Die Klänge der Flöte, des Waldhorns

¹See Meyer, pp. 119-122. There is clear evidence that Contessa's Novelle was plagiarized by Wilhelm Hauff in Die Bettlerin vom Pont des Arts (1828).

²The story is close-textured only insofar as a tightly interwoven mesh of social and blood relationships affects all the major characters and the plot itself.

³Heckel, p. 307; Hewett-Thayer, 26-27; von Maassen in the introduction to Serapiontische Erzählungen, ed. G. von Maassen (Munich, 1922), pp. XIX-XX (subsequently referred to as SE).

begleiten neben dem Instrument des "Harfners" die eingefügten Gesänge von Sehnsucht, Verlassenheit und Trost im Lied.¹

But even Meyer feels that Contessa was still operating under the stark influence of Goethean Classicism when, for example, he allowed Eduard's uncle to vent his animosity towards the Romantic writers in the opening chapter of Der Instinkt:

Es wird mir hier zu eng im Schloss, lächelte Eduard;
ich muss, ich muss ins Weite.
Ins Weite, nur immer ins Weite! sagte der Oheim, . . .
Als ob es dort anders wäre, so lange man nicht selbst
anders wird! Ich liebe das nicht. Man kann heut zu
Tage beinah kein Buch mehr aufschlagen, ohne dass einem
daraus diese unendliche Sehnsucht nach der Weite und
Ferne wie ein Thauwind ins Gesicht bliese.²

But Meyer, presumably in the best interests of his own tenuous argument, omits Eduard's reply to his uncle's outburst: it is in fact Eduard who has the last word:

Auch das Höchste wird gemissbraucht, lieber Onkel.³

Meyer makes the simplistic mistake of assuming blandly that the uncle more or less represents the author's own standpoint, failing to perceive that Contessa is already employing what was to become a favourite technique: that of culling the maximum humorous effect from the direct interplay of two characters, one representing the Classical ("prosaic") pole, the other the Romantic ("poetic") pole.⁴ Eduard's uncle is but a forerunner of such "prosaic" characters as Frau Mathildis in Magister

¹Meyer, p. 123.

²Schriften, II, p. 3 (quoted only in part by Meyer, p. 124).

³Ibid.

⁴Cf. Pankalla, p. 71.

Rösslein and Kammerrat Aber in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel. Therefore, on the level of technique alone, Der Instinkt is not to be separated categorically from the later stories, but rather is to be seen, with Manon, as the true beginning of a homogeneous body of work. Even apart from Contessa's superficial techniques, one can point confidently to the existence of certain basically Romantic elements other than those cited by Meyer, apparently imperceptible to all Contessa's critics, which link the two early stories to Meister Dietrich and later works:

(a) In the character of Eduard, one finds clear emphasis upon the positive aspects and consequences of irrational behaviour, not least in the magnetic attraction he feels towards the vagabond life of the wandering actors and musicians. In him we witness, in embryonic form, the daemonic drives of Dietrich and later heroes.

(b) In the fifth chapter of Der Instinkt, through the device of theatrical distance (discarded in later works), Eduard's mundane love for Angelika-Mariane is transcended into an ideal, artistic relationship. But this ennobling of real love into ideal love by means of an artistic process happens to Eduard from without: he submits to the process in spite of himself, thus appearing almost to be the "victim" of his own passion. This essentially irrational, slavish devotion of the hero who does blind obeisance at the feet of his beloved is found in most of Contessa's stories.

(c) By virtue of the change which occurs in Eduard, the object of his love is also transfigured; Angelika-Mariane appears as a quasi-divine, statuesque vision of womanhood--Madonna-like, static, radiant:

Aber wie verschieden von dem Bilde, welches die Harfnerin in ihm zurückgelassen hatte, war der Eindruck, den heut die Schauspielerin auf sein Herz machte. Diese Anmuth, diese Würde

in Wort, Geberde und Stellung riss ihn zur Bewunderung fort. Wie eine Gottheit stand sie vor ihm im Glanze der Verklärung, und wenn er jene geliebt hatte, hätte er vor dieser die Kniee beugen und anbeten mögen.¹

This apotheosis of the female occurs in most subsequent works.²

(d) Dream-images, feelings and thoughts show a marked tendency both towards confusion and towards complete subversion of the individual who experiences them. This Hoffmannesque syndrome generally accompanies the disintegration of the personality in many of Contessa's tragic figures.

(e) In Manon, a distinctly positive view of death motivates much of the heroine's behaviour. Contessa, in all his tragic stories, makes much of an almost Baroque dichotomy of worldly pessimism and religious optimism.³ Manon's prayer for reunion with her dead lover is again merely the first of many instances of the death-wish in Contessa's narratives.

In the light of such overwhelming evidence, it is clear that no startling metamorphosis occurred between 1804 and 1809 in Contessa's approach to his art, nor are the first stories he wrote particularly un-Romantic. That the early stories are perhaps a little more restrained, that he does not allow his riotous imagination the same freedom he did in his Märchen, is possibly true, but this should perhaps be attributed to sheer inexperience rather than to a complete change of literary colour.

¹Schriften, II, p. 23.

²This is dealt with thoroughly in my study of recurrent motifs elsewhere in this thesis. See below pp. 76 ff.

³Cf. Contessa's dramatic prowess (p. 5 above): once again, in this dichotomy, Contessa resembles fellow Silesian Andreas Gryphius. Not only in Contessa's "diesseits-jenseits" polarity are we reminded particularly of Gryphius' Cardenio und Celinde, but also in Contessa's frequent view of love as a daemonic urge leading inevitably to crime.

The reason for Contessa's sudden departure from Weimar in 1805 just prior to the first performance of Das Räthsel has never been adequately explained. On the one hand it has been suggested that he wished to avoid the excitement and exposure to society that doubtless would have accrued to the dramatist on such an occasion; on the other hand it is possible that he was simply bored with Weimar and sought the greater freedom of Berlin, the première of his play being merely coincidental.¹ Once in Berlin, he made the acquaintance of Henriette Nauendorf, the beautiful cousin of his beloved Hannchen; one year later she had become his house-keeper and mistress and in 1808 they were married. This second union was never happy. Henriette severely hampered Contessa's intellectual and literary pursuits; she appears to have been a loquacious, domineering woman who forced the normally reticent Contessa deeper and deeper into the shell he had built around himself since Hannchen's death. It was only the birth of a son, Karl, on 21 August 1810, that saved the marriage from divorce.² The two women in Contessa's life, Hannchen and Henriette, undoubtedly had some influence upon his work insofar as they can be seen as prototypes for two of his favourite stock character-types. The passive, vulnerable female (viewed positively and apotheosized frequently) would

¹For evidence of the former contention, see Heckel, p. 304; for the latter, see SE, p. xiv.

²Karl Contessa apparently died without issue, thus making the locations of original Contessa MSS extremely difficult to ascertain. Hans Meyer's dissatisfaction with his own contribution to this aspect of research is apparent in Meyer, pp. 5-11.

seem inspired by the victimized Hannchen,¹ whilst the "prosaic," domestic female (viewed tolerantly, but not entirely positively) seems to reflect Henriette's qualities.² Both types, it should be noted, like their real-life counterparts, generally possess physical beauty.

Between 1805 and 1816, the duration of his Berlin period, Contessa wrote nine plays (two being "translations" from French originals), one operetta, seven stories and made contributions to Der Roman des Freiherrn von Vieren (with E.T.A. Hoffmann, Fouqué and Chamisso). Der Talisman, a sequel to Das Räthsel, but which never enjoyed the same success, was written in 1806. Then followed a succession of briefly successful, but quickly forgotten comedies: Der Fündling (1807), Der unterbrochne Schwätzer (1808), Der Liebes-Zwist (1808), Ich bin mein Bruder (1809) and Almenorade (1812).³ In Raimund (1811) and Lebensharmonie (1812)⁴ Contessa was led into the bypaths of Romantic drama, employing techniques which show the

¹E.g. Manon, Kunigunde in Meister Dietrich, Maria in Der Todesengel, Elisabeth in Der schwarze See, Thorhilda in Das Schwert und die Schlangen, et al.

²E.g. Frau Mathildis in Magister Rösslein, Caroline in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel, Gertrud in Der schwarze See, et al.

³"Der Talisman," Schriften, II, pp. 205-244. "Der Fündling," Schriften, II, pp. 245-353. "Der unterbrochne Schwätzer," (translation of Delaunay-Vasary's Le parleur contrarié [1807]), Schriften, II, pp. 69-140 (Houwald's dating [1805] is, of course, erroneous). "Der Liebes-Zwist," (translation of Molière's Le dépit amoureux [1656]), Schriften, III, pp. 1-128. "Ich bin mein Bruder," Schriften, III, pp. 205-282. "Almenorade," Schriften, IV, pp. 113-128. An excellent translation of Ich bin mein Bruder exists in English in: "I am my brother: a comedy," Scots Magazine, II, 6 (1820), 225 ff.

⁴"Raimund," Schriften, IV, pp. 59-86. "Lebensharmonie," Schriften, IV, pp. 129-164.

influence of Houwald's fate tragedies; in Die Ehen werden im Himmel geschlossen (1811)¹ he tried his hand at literary satire in direct imitation of Tieck's comedies.² Contessa's one-act operetta, Der Orakelspruch (1812),³ is of no literary significance.

Meister Dietrich (1809),⁴ a skilfully intensified tragedy set, as are so many of Contessa's stories, against the background of the Thirty Years' War, marked the writer's return, after a five-year interval, to prose narrative. Whilst Contessa's critics, as has been seen above,⁵ seem absurdly anxious to identify this story as symptomatic of Contessa's "breakthrough" into the Romantic vein of storytelling, where he apparently burst free from the inhibiting shackles of Goethean classicism, it is ironic that in Meister Dietrich above all Contessa's ideas show a similarity to Goethe's principle of Steigerung and other Goethean concepts, not found in previous (nor in subsequent) works. Even the form of the story itself is gesteigert: it opens and terminates peacefully, enclosing a colossal central climax. This is essentially Goethean symmetry: a systole-diastole-systole sequence. It is repeatedly emphasized throughout this story that (solar) light is essential to organic growth and that such light, viewed directly, will blind and destroy: it must be veiled and seen only

¹Schriften, IV, pp. 87-112.

²Hewett-Thayer, 25-26 discusses the influence of Tieck upon this and other works.

³Schriften, IV, pp. 165-214.

⁴Schriften, III, pp. 129-203. First publ. in Dramatische Spiele und Erzählungen der Brüder Contessa (Hirschberg, 1811, 1814). Also in: Erzählungen (Dresden, 1819); SE, pp. 1-63.

⁵pp. 13 ff.

in Abglanz.¹ Not only does Contessa equate the Countess and the light of the sun in metaphorical terms, but he also develops the plant image of Dietrich:

"Für mich," sprach der Maler: "für mich, ist nur ein
Einziges, wonach mein Leben lechzet, wie im Sonnenbrand
eine Pflanze nach dem Thau; . . ."²

and later:

. . . so war ihm nicht anders, als ob nach langem Winter
ein warmer Frühling in seinem Herzen mit Gewalt aufgehen
wolle; neue Blüthen drangen hervor, die welken Blätter-
fielen ab; . . .³

But the Countess does not remain veiled from Dietrich as (even literally) in the first chapter: his consuming obsession lacks the distance essential to protect him from the sun's harmful radiation and he soon finds himself in an emotional wilderness:

Wie eine öde Wüste voll Sonnenbrand, dehnte sich nun
weitgestreckt das Leben vor ihm aus und nirgend bot
ein Baum ihm Labung oder Schatten; . . .⁴

The incessant striving of Dietrich, interrupted only briefly by Kunigunde's death, towards the mysterious figure of the Countess, his life-principle, is essentially that of a sun-plant relationship. Dietrich's oscillations between conscience and lust can thus be seen as a vertical, organic spiral from man towards woman, from earth to sun, exactly corresponding to Goethe's concepts of the interdependence of polarities (Polarität) and ascent (Steigerung): "the principle whereby a substance through

¹Cf. Faust's central monologue, "Vom farbigen Abglanz," Faust, II, i, "Anmutige Gegend."

²Schriften, III, p. 155.

³Schriften, III, p. 172.

⁴Schriften, III, p. 188.

quantitative intensification undergoes a qualitative change to something of a different order" in an "upward progression."¹ Dietrich's end is tragic in a specifically Goethean sense. The culmination of his adherence to the constant exhortations of the "man in green" and the Countess to allow his will to function unchecked² is the disintegration of a man, like Goethe's despot, who ceases to move between the poles of his existence with the natural rhythm of polarity and who therefore, as must happen if systole does not follow diastole, soars to his destruction and death:

Ein jeder Mensch wird von seinen Gewohnheiten regiert,
 nur wird er, durch äussere Bedingungen eingeschränkt,
 sich mässig verhalten, und Mässigung wird ihm zur
 Gewohnheit. Gerade das Entgegengesetzte findet sich bei
 dem Despoten; ein uneingeschränkter Wille steigert sich
 selbst und muss, von aussen nicht gewarnt, nach dem
 völlig Grenzenlosen streben.³

One could even go further. Dietrich's tragedy is an allegory of what Goethe deplored in the Romantics: it is the tragedy of formlessness, of slavish adherence to one pole (feeling) without its counterforce (form). But perhaps this is fanciful: perhaps we are attributing to Contessa things beyond his limited vision. Certainly his critics would say so, but it should be remembered that these are the same scholars who mistakenly find Contessa's first two prose works un-Romantic and Meister Dietrich "hochromantisch"! Perhaps, thanks to their tendency (Hans Heckel and Georg von Maassen being notable exceptions) to relegate Contessa to

¹L. A. Willoughby, "Literary Relations in the Light of Goethe's Principle of 'Wiederholte Spiegelungen'," in Goethe: Poet and Thinker (London, 1962), p. 153.

²"Wollt nur, so könnt Ihr auch," etc. Schriften, III, p. 134 et passim.

³Goethe, "Noten und Abhandlungen zum Divan," Jubiläums-Ausgabe, V, p. 283.

the ranks of the Unterhaltungsliteraten, ever eclipsed by the great E.T.A. Hoffmann, they have considered him incapable of ever addressing himself to the same problems concerning minds like Goethe. It is high time that somebody relieved Contessa of this stigma. Is it not possible on the one hand that Eduard's reply to his uncle in the opening paragraphs of Der Instinkt¹ was effectively a reply to Goethe (and other critics of the Romantic school)? And on the other hand was not Meister Dietrich perhaps a caution to the Romantics against the dangers of formlessness?

Contessa's next story, Magister Rösslein (1810),² which enjoyed enormous popularity during the first half of the nineteenth century, can definitely be considered Unterhaltungsliteratur; as in Der Instinkt, the intricacies of the plot bear down heavily upon what significant ideas are contained in the work, although the story is less episodic than Contessa's second: it is much more homogeneous in construction. The Faustian pact whereby the Devil agrees to assume Rösslein's marital role for one year creates the crass identity problems normally associated with Contessa's use of the Doppelgänger motif. There is much farce and slapstick, narrated with spirit and with deftly infused irony. Of all Contessa's tales, this is probably the most autobiographical; undoubtedly the frustrations of his second marriage were sublimated in his literary creations even to the extent that an element of impish wish-fulfilment is latent in

¹See above, p. 14.

²Schriften, IV, pp. 1-58. First published in Dramatische Spiele und Erzählungen der Brüder Contessa (1814), II, pp. 99-169. Also in: SE, pp. 193-240; Deutsche Literatur. Sammlung literar. Kunst- und Kulturdenkmäler in Entwicklungsreihen, Reihe Romantik, XVIII (Phantasiestücke), ed. Andreas Müller (Leipzig, 1936), pp. 5-33, 298-299; Magister Rösslein, ed. Jørgen Hendriksen (Copenhagen, 1945), 43 pp. (containing introduction and notes by the editor).

the behaviour of some of his heroes. And Rösslein, like Contessa, finally accepts marriage as a cross to be borne stoically:

Ein'm jeglich Ding ist auf der Welt
 sein Ordnung und Gesetz bestellt,
 die es mit scharpfem Zaum regier'n,
 ein jeder auch sein Kreuz thut führen.
 Wer solcher Zucht sich baar will machen,
 rennt leicht dem Teufel in den Rachen.
 Wer aber was ihm auferlegt,
 den schweren Sack ohn' Murren trägt,
 in Einfalt, fromm, demüthigleich,
 der geht gradaus ins Himmelreich
 zu ewger Lust und Freuden ein.
 Das woll' uns allen Gott verleihn!¹

The didacticism of this ending is as Goethean as it is Christian. Absolute freedom is mythical. Man, if he is to survive and retain his sanity, must remain subject to the laws of polarity. Rösslein cannot roam around forever "wie ein Vogel, der dem Bauer entwichen ist, ohne Zweck und Ziel."² He must return ultimately to the identity he temporarily forfeited, thus completing one circuit in the spiral of his existence, moving from systole to diastole to systole again. Hewett-Thayer's contention that "the familiar classification of Contessa as a Romanticist is both correct and incorrect" is hopefully now beginning to emerge as the main issue in this chapter.³ It cannot be denied that Contessa's works initially impress the reader as belonging to late Romanticism: his style is so close to that of E.T.A. Hoffmann that, even when he is not intentionally imitating Hoffmann, as in Das Bild der Mutter, his works could sometimes

¹Schriften, IV, pp. 56-57.

²Schriften, IV, pp. 44

³Hewett-Thayer, 34-35.

be mistaken for Hoffmann's. Contessa employs all the materials and effects of late Romantic fiction too: the phantasmagoria, the eery atmosphere of moonlit nights in the forest, the legends of the Riesengebirge, the magnetism of the mountains, the mysterious and sinister figure of Rübezahl, etc. He is deeply concerned with the irrational side of human behaviour, with the disintegration of the personality, with schizophrenia, persecution-mania and sexual drives, with the massive guilt-complexes associated with the criminal act and with the death-wish of the manic depressive. His works would indeed be a happy hunting-ground for the literary psychologist.. But, for all this, as can be seen from Meister Dietrich and Magister Rösslein, Contessa's Weltanschauung actually straddles the turn of the century: he is a product of the Enlightenment trying to reconcile the rational and the irrational in art and in life at a time when the irrational was becoming highly fashionable. It is his Catholicism, his confidence that God is God and the Devil is the Devil and that man will strive interminably in rhythmic oscillation between these two life-principles in a gentle upward spiral, which impregnates his works. None of Contessa's heroes, however evil his actions, dies without contrition in his heart: all are either redeemed in death (e.g. Dietrich) or else are reconciled with those whom they have wronged (e.g. Rösslein). Contessa was in terms of literary style and technique a Romantic writer, but one imbued with a distinctly Christian view of a logically ordered universe in which evil is tolerated only because of divine compassion and grace. And Contessa conceives this ethic, if not in Goethean terms, then nevertheless in complete harmony with Goethe's principles.

Haushahn und Paradiesvogel (1813),¹ which followed Magister Rösslein, leads us one stage further towards an understanding of Contessa's complex relationship with the literary movement he is said to characterize and yet clearly does not, for in this fanciful Märchen, one of his most charming works which has been unjustly denigrated by scholars,² he sharply polarizes the Enlightenment and Romanticism in the characters of Kammerrat Aber and Doktor Schachtheimer. In the pompous and greedy Aber, Contessa develops the negative aspects of the Enlightenment, the ultimate product of which is seen as a man so devoid of sensitivity that his behaviour is conditioned entirely by material ends. The diametrical opposition of the Kammerrat and Schachtheimer, who represents the other (Romantic) pole in equal excess, becomes clear when Schachtheimer (in fact the Berggeist Rübezahl in disguise) openly attacks the "prosaic" attitudes of the Enlightenment:

"O ihr armen Menschlein . . . ihr Armseligen, denen die Berge nichts weiter sind, als Futterraufen für eure Kühe, Kräuterkasten für eure Apotheken, oder, falls ihr zur eleganten Welt gehört, Belvederes und Landschaftshintergründe für euern Augenkitzel geschaffen, wenn's hoch kommt, seltsame, mitunter etwas beschwerliche Launen der Natur! Wehet auch einmal einen von den Besten unter euch der Athem des Berggeistes aus den dunkelblauen Massen mit geheimnisvollen Schauern an, so weiss er nicht, was er mit seinem Gefühl anfangen soll, und möchte sich in der Verlegenheit lieber gleich darauf setzen, um mit ihm gen Himmel zu reiten. Aber nicht hinaufwärts zieht dich die unbekannte Sehnsucht, hinabwärts ruft sie dich in den Schooss der Erde"3

¹Schriften, IV, pp. 215-324. First published in Zwei Erzählungen (Berlin, 1815). Also in: Märchen und Nachtstücke, ed. G. von Maassen (Munich, 1922), pp. 1-92 (subsequently referred to as MN). Since he is convinced Contessa had read Der goldene Topf beforehand, Hans Meyer thinks Houwald's dating (1813) too early.

²E.g. Heckel, p. 309; Hewett-Thayer, 30-31; MN, p. 221.

³Schriften, IV, pp. 228-229.

The Aber-Schachtheimer polarity is echoed again and again throughout the Märchen in other character-contrasts: e.g. Haushahn (the "prosaic" [Aufklärung] principle)-Paradiesvogel (the "poetic" [Romantik] principle), Caroline-Professor, Caroline-Nachtigall and others. Whereas the contrast of Aber and Schachtheimer is extreme, that of Caroline (Haushahn) and the Professor (Paradiesvogel) is central. The story is concerned primarily with the Professor's redemption from his destructive, daemonic drive through Caroline's quasi-Christian, rationally precipitated exorcism, for which she employs either the symbol of domesticity, Haushahn, or the three magic flowers, symbols of faith, hope and love. The Professor is thus purged and reborn, now devoid of earlier schizoid tendencies. Therefore we find an inherent neutrality in Contessa's position. He seems to be saying that even the most extreme manifestations of the Romantic soul are infinitely preferable to the aridity of the Classical mind when refined to its limits, but that, as a mode of existence, as a philosophy of life, Romanticism is extremely dangerous. He seems to be pleading for a moderate synthesis of Classical and Romantic ideals in a new literary mode, suffused overall in love:

Nur in der Dichtung dunkelklaren Träumen
Blüht eine Ahnung jener alten Zeit,
Nur in der Töne Kinderlallen keimen
Verlorne Laute der Unendlichkeit,
Und nieder steigt, gesandt aus Himmelsräumen
Von Vater, der zum Mittler sie geweiht.
Die Liebe steigt herab den Erdensöhnen,
Das Leben mit dem Himmel zu versöhnen.¹

Parental love unites Caroline and the Professor at the end of the Märchen (more autobiography)² and the two symbolic birds, who were always fighting

¹Schriften, IV, p. 218. The Professor's poem (Stanza 2). My italics: this paradox epitomizes the synthesis Contessa is advocating.

²See above, p.17.

initially, now live together in peace:

In dem Haushalt des Professors aber schlugen Friede, Freud' und Einigkeit von nun an Ihre Wohnstatt auf; jeden Gegensatz, jeden Widerspruch zwischen ihm und seiner Frau glich die gemeinschaftliche Liebe zu ihrem Kinde aus: in ihr hatten die lange getrennten Herzen sich wiedergefunden. Sogar der Hahn und der Paradiesvogel vergassen ihrer alten Feindschaft, wurden treue Gefährten und pickten friedlich nebeneinander ihre Körner aus einer Schüssel.¹

In Haushahn und Paradiesvogel Contessa's work displays a marked discrepancy between Romantic form and un-Romantic, even anti-Romantic content. Perhaps his greatest weakness was that he was incapable of implementing consistently his literary ideals in his own tales, for then the discrepancy would have been avoided and he might have been recognized as a very good writer. But such implementation lay beyond the realm of possibility. To have achieved a synthesis of the Apollonian and the Dionysian principles would in itself have negated Contessa's dualistic philosophy; like Euphorion, the child of Helena and Faust, such a synthesis would have been doomed to Icarian failure. Only on a mystical plane, beyond semantic limitations, could such a fusion take place, and then either in the mind of an eagle-eyed genius or else, as the Catholic Contessa probably believed, in the soul of a saint. Contessa was neither of these: Contessa was no mystic.

In Berlin, he adopted much the same life-style as in Weimar, assiduously avoiding the established literary circle around the Varnhagens and literary salons like that of Wilhelmine von Chézy. To begin with, Contessa cultivated only the close friendships of his student days and acknowledged

¹Schriften, IV, p. 324.

only those people introduced to him by Hitzig and Houwald. On Hoffmann's return to Berlin from Bamberg in 1814, Julius Hitzig, already a friend of Hoffmann for ten years, started to organize literary tea-parties under the auspices of the so-called Seraphinenorden. This group, much less exclusive than the later Serapionsbrüder which developed from it, met between October 1814 and the autumn of 1816 and, besides Hitzig, numbered amongst its members Contessa, Hoffmann, Chamisso, Fouqué and Eichendorff, as well as several minor figures whose connections with literature were but tenuous.¹ Little is known of the substance of these meetings beyond Georg Seegemund's brief note: "es geht meist poetisch und lebendig zu . . .".² However, it is likely that plans were first laid in one of the sessions for combined work on Der Roman des Freiherrn von Vieren: Contessa, who was allocated the task of writing the first chapter, probably began work on his contribution in January 1815.³ In time, Hoffman and "Contessa le cadet," as Hoffmann called him, became warm friends, for they had much in common. A testimony to this friendship can be found in Hoffmann's fond characterization of the Serapionsbrüder Sylvester (Contessa) and his attribution to Sylvester of some of his most successful tales: Meister Martin, Das Fräulein von Scuderi and Der Zusammenhang der Dinge. Fouqué, Houwald and Hitzig were unanimous

¹Dr Koreff (Novalis' physician and friend), Rev Georg Seegemund, Major Friedrich von Pfuel (brother of Kleist's friend, Ernst von Pfuel), Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel (an old friend of Hoffmann's) and Ludwig Robert (Varnhagen's brother-in-law).

²Letter to Wilhelm Neumann, dated 14 March 1815, quoted in Friedrich Schnapp, "Der Seraphinenorden und die Serapionsbrüder E.T.A. Hoffmanns," Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch, N.F. III, 101. Subsequently referred to as Schnapp.

³The Roman en quatre is discussed further in connection with Contessa's tale, Das Bild der Mutter (1817). See below pp. 35-36, 38.

in their view that Hoffmann's descriptions of Sylvester truly portrayed Contessa himself.¹

Contessa, for his part, from now on showed clear influence of E.T.A. Hoffmann in his works, although it will always remain debatable what actual degree of reciprocity existed in Hoffmann-Contessa literary relations. It must be remembered that, in his time, Contessa was quite as widely known and respected a literary figure as Hoffmann himself. There is no reason to suppose that Hoffmann, despite his overwhelming egotism, did not admire Contessa's work to the extent of emulating him;² besides, Contessa's elegant, flowing style is, if anything, eminently superior to Hoffmann's. When Contessa's Magister Rösslein was still standard fare for German readers and Das Räthsel still being performed on the Berlin stage, Hoffmann's achievements, whilst acknowledged by literary historians of the day, no longer enjoyed popular acclaim. It was the efforts of certain scholars during the final decades of the nineteenth century which redeemed Hoffman from literary oblivion. Contessa, it must be regretted, escaped their attention and subsequent attempts to vindicate him, proving abortive, have apparently done little to rectify the excessive reduction of his literary standing in relation to Hoffmann's. The ratio of the one writer to the other in terms of literary excellence definitely requires the impartial scrutiny of scholars other than Hoffmann specialists. And this ratio alone should not be the sole criterion. By far the most unscientific aspect of the predom-

¹The descriptions of Theodor (Hoffmann) are quoted in full by von Maassen in SE, pp. xxii-xxiv.

²Von Maassen has shown that Hoffmann deliberately imitated Contessa in Das fremde Kind (1817). See Georg von Maassen, "Ein Romantikerscherz," Der grundgescheute Antiquarius, II (1923), pp. 63-65.

inantly negative assessment of Contessa during this century is that his neglect has been engendered by scholars' persistent abuse of Hoffmann, whom they have wielded above the minor figures of late Romanticism as a colossal literary yardstick. Perhaps had Germany not lost Silesia, including the Riesengebirge, so prominent in Contessa's works, to Poland, then some post-war Silesian scholars might have pitted their prejudice against that of the Hoffmannists and Contessa would have been restored if not to popularity, then at least to just recognition as one of Silesia's most accomplished literary figures since Andreas Gryphius.

In Der Todesengel (1814)¹ Contessa returned to themes similar to those found in Meister Dietrich. Again a maddened lover commits murder; again there is a violent oscillation between conscience and desire in the murderer's behaviour; again the hero is redeemed by his death. To these elements is added the same didactic message of Meister Dietrich: the warning against total self-surrender to the Dionysian principle:

"Auch hat wohl, . . . der Mensch weit minder sich vor
Räubern zu fürchten, als vor den bösen Trieben
seines eigenen Herzens, die wie Gewappnete ihn auf
der Strasse des Heils überfallen und ihm sein kost-
bares Kleinod, den Frieden seiner Seele, rauben."²

As in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel, parental love is seen as the synthesizing agent which finally unites Wolf and Maria, this time in death, with the child Rudolf. This is not one of Contessa's more enjoyable stories. What was doubtless intended as a psychological study of a murderer whose crime, unlike Dietrich's, goes undiscovered, as a study of the delicate

¹Schriften, V, pp. 1-76. First publ. in Die Musen, ed. Fouqué and Neumann (1814). Also in: Zwei Erzählungen (Berlin, 1815); SE, pp. 65-126.

²Schriften, V, pp. 43-44.

interaction of love, hate and guilt, deteriorates into a grotesque melodrama of sin and remorse, full of pietistic sentiment, emotional posturing and dubious character-motivation. For instance, the deaths of hero and heroine, whilst (since Rudolf's death) essential to Contessa's formula of a love-synthesis, are extremely poorly motivated, as they are ostensibly the consequence of totally unexplained psychosomatic relapse.

The other story of the same period, Vergib uns unsre Schuld (1814),¹ a domestic tragedy with a central identity-problem, although in infinitely better taste than Der Todesengel and with faultless psychological motivation, is unevenly balanced in construction. This is the only one of Contessa's tales to contain explicit historical material, complete with footnotes, which is welded fairly successfully to the basic plot in order to perform definite functions. The pattern of historical events, whilst obviously heightening the tension of the external action and thus entertaining the general reader, also provides a sombre, threatening background perfectly synchronized with the development of the inner action. This either places characters in tense external circumstances which have a direct effect upon their inner state of mind and their consequent decisions and actions (i.e. upon their strained relationships), or, conversely, it shows how completely hermetic the domestic problems become, totally divorced from environmental influences and thus transcending them. But Contessa seems to have been unsure precisely which use to make of this device. In the fourth section, for example, he strives to link the historical and domestic elements by reflecting in the misfortunes and confusion of war Georg's deterioration: the Angst and Gefahr of these troubled days seem as applic-

¹Schriften, V, pp. 77-154. First publ. in Taschenbuch der Liebe und Freundschaft (1816). Also in: Erzählungen (1819), II; SE, pp. 127-191.

able to Georg's illness as to Tilly's advances. But Contessa, in the very next paragraph, emphasizes the isolation of Georg, Klara and Therese from their environment:

Georgs Krankenzimmer [schien] gar nicht zum Hause, noch zur Stadt zu gehören, ja gänzlich in einer andern Gegend der Erde zu liegen.¹

This inability of Contessa to bring about a comfortable solution to such purely technical problems perhaps accounts for the gross imbalance, the top-heaviness in the construction of Vergib uns unsre Schuld. This story, whose first chapter is full of vivid Romantic imagery (the old oak tree with its strange legends, the angel who erases the fiery letter from Georg's forehead and disarms him of his sword, the shield descending from heaven, etc.), ends in pure narrative as a simple adventure story, devoid of any symbolism, in which Contessa for a while even adopts an epic style completely foreign to his works. Never before or after were Contessa's inadequacies as a literary technician exposed quite so saliently as in the two stories of 1814; on no other occasion did he lapse into the manifest tastelessness of Der Todesengel or the technical gaucherie of Vergib uns unsre Schuld. Indeed, his next works, Der schwarze See (1815),² Das

¹Schriften, V, p. 125.

²Schriften, V, pp. 155-204. First publ. in Salina, ed. Eberhard and Lafontaine, II (1816), Heft 5, pp. 129-194. Also in: Erzählungen (1819), I; MN, pp. 179-218; Der schwarze See. Eine romantische Geschichte (Friedeberg/Queis and Leipzig, 1923), 34 pp.

Gastmahl (1815)¹ and Das Schwert und die Schlangen (1816),² are among his best.

In Der schwarze See, Contessa wisely relegates historical data, such as the mention of Leuthold's conduct in the Great Northern War (1700-21), to a purely incidental position: the story really tells of how supernatural forces, reminiscent of Fouqué's Undine, disrupt the domestic security of a forester's family. Common motifs and character-types found throughout Contessa's other tales abound.³ There is constant emphasis upon the redemptive power of love: the ultimate triumph of the rational (divine) life-principle over the evil nixie of the lake affirms yet again Contessa's didactic purpose. The most interesting aspect of the story is the perverse Entsagung of the "Fremder Jäger" at the close:

Da trat der Fremde heran, welcher bisher starr, mit
gesenktem Haupte, den dunkelglühenden Blick auf das
Wasser geheftet, . . . und sprach mit dumpfer Stimme:
"Lebt wohl für die Ewigkeit! Mit Euch und Eurer Liebe
ist ein Höherer. . . . Mein ist nun die Wasserbraut!"⁴

Whereas the recurrent pattern of the Entsagung of Contessa's heroes had hitherto involved a renunciation of their daemonic will in the

¹Schriften, V, pp. 205-246. First publ. in E(!).W. Contessa, Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouqué and E.T.A. Hoffmann, Kindermärchen, I (1816), pp. 1-62 (2nd ed. 1839, 3rd ed. 1890). Also in: MN, pp. 93-128; Deutsche Literatur. Sammlung literar. Kunst- und Kulturdenkmäler in Entwicklungsreihen, Reihe Romantik, XV (Märchen), ed. Andreas Müller (Leipzig, 1930), pp. 173-194, 312.

²Schriften, V, pp. 247-306. First publ. in E(!). W. Contessa, Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouqué and E.T.A. Hoffmann, Kindermärchen, II (1817), pp. 111-197 (2nd and 3rd eds. as Vol. I); MN, pp. 129-178.

³These are dealt with thoroughly elsewhere in this thesis. See Chapter III.

⁴Schriften, V, p. 203.

interests of a pure, seraphic love, the "Fremder Jäger" renounces Elisabeth for the nixie, thus reversing the customary procedure. This suggests that he is in fact no ordinary mortal, that the remarkable similarity of his initial appearance and behaviour to that of Dr Schachtheimer (Rübezahl) in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel¹ is not accidental, for whilst Willbrand dies desperately resisting the nixie's powers, the "Fremder Jäger" seems to have superhuman strength, greater even than hers: his subordination to her powers is purely voluntary. And the last words of the tale endow him with legendary stature:

An dem Todtenmale Willbrands aber, welches die Landleute nach alter Sitte hoch auf dem Hügel der Försterei gegenüber, errichtet hatten, da wollte noch viele Jahre nachher Mancher in stürmischen Nächten eine hohe dunkle Gestalt sitzen gesehen haben, und die dunkle Erscheinung war in der ganzen Gegend unter dem Namen, "der fremde Jäger," wohlbekannt.²

It is quite wrong of Hans Meyer to identify the "Fremder Jäger" of this story with the "man in green" of Meister Dietrich who, whilst indeed of mysterious presence and dressed often in huntsman's attire, does nothing which cannot be explained logically in terms of the external action of the tale: he is finally revealed to be simply an Imperial spy, hence his disguises and clandestine dealings.³

The "Fremder Jäger" is in fact cast in the same mould as such supernatural figures as Schachtheimer, Jonathan and the non-human guests of Das Gastmahl, Contessa's next work, a delightful fairy-tale published

¹See below, pp. 95 ff.

²Schriften, V, p. 204.

³Hewett-Thayer makes the careless mistake of calling him "der schwarze Jäger." This was of course Wolf's pseudonym in Der Todesengel. See Hewett-Thayer, 29 and Meyer, p. 164.

in the same illustrated collection of children's stories as Fouqué's Die kleinen Leute and Hoffmann's Nussknacker und Mausekönig. Contessa's contribution to the volume, whose first paragraph is an obvious paraphrase of the opening of Fouqué's Undine, is probably the most appealing of all three for non-adult readers, employing widely the repetitive and cumulative formulae of the folk-tale and the nursery-rhyme. Both this story and Das Schwert und die Schlangen make light reading, of interest to the literary scholar only insofar as a close examination of them yields evidence that Contessa assimilated much material from earlier stories into these works; in consequence of this they will be discussed later in the relevant portion of this thesis.

The Roman en quatre, Der Roman des Freiherrn von Vieren, on which Contessa collaborated with E.T.A. Hoffmann, Chamisso and Fouqué,¹ contains three chapters by Contessa (1, 4 and 8), later absorbed into Das Bild der Mutter (1817).² Of Contessa's contribution Helmuth Rogge writes:

Im einzelnen hat zweifellos keiner der drei berühmten Romantiker, sondern der stille, bescheidene Contessa das Beste der gemeinsamen Arbeit geleistet. Namentlich die schwungvolle Introduction des ersten Kapitels, der

¹Helmuth Rogge's study of the original MSS revealed, contrary to previous belief, that Fouqué, not Hitzig, wrote the second and seventh chapters. Rogge also rectified von Maassen's error of attributing the fourth chapter to Hoffmann instead of to Contessa. He supports his claims with various correspondence. For an extremely sound documentation of this undertaking, together with the text, see Helmuth Rogge, Der Doppelroman der Berliner Romantik (Leipzig, 1926), II, pp. 236-248, 326-341 (subsequently referred to as Rogge).

²Schriften, VI, pp. 175-283. First publ. in Das Bild der Mutter und das blonde Kind. Zwei Erzählungen (Berlin, 1818). Also in: KGH, pp. 157-248; Contessa and Fouqué, Undine und das Bild der Mutter (Munich, 1924). See Appendix B for details of adaptation from Der Roman des Freiherrn von Vieren (below, p. 107).

grosse Theatertraum des vierten und neben den schon genannten Szenen die Zeichnung des halb verrückten philosophischen Alten, der bunte Stecknadeln in ein grünes Sofa steckt, sind hervorragend gelungen und können heute noch fesseln.¹

On the death of his second wife in 1816, Contessa moved from Berlin to Houwald's estate at Sellendorf in der Lausitz so that his six year-old son could be educated as one of Houwald's large family. Here he lived until 1822 when Houwald was compelled to sell his home and moved to Neuhaus bei Lübben. Of this time Houwald writes:

Seit jener Zeit genoss ich nun das seltne Glück, meinen ältesten vertrautesten Freund völlig als ein Mitglied meiner Familie betrachten, und mit ihm alles was das Leben giebt, selbst jeden Gedanken theilen zu können.²

Were it not for the increasing discomfort now caused Contessa by the tuberculosis of the lung he had contracted, these days were days of serenity. His infrequent visits to Berlin primarily for meetings of the Serapionsbrüder or for theatrical events, where his appearance on at least one occasion was apparently greeted with positive jubilation, were often undertaken with extreme reluctance, for Contessa disliked leaving the countryside for the city, especially in the spring.³ Other excursions were made, generally in the company of his brother or Houwald. In 1819 Contessa spent a somewhat boisterous vacation in Warmbrunn with Hoffmann and his drinking friends; in 1820 the Contessa brothers visited Dresden

¹Rogge, pp. 338-339.

²Schriften, I, pp. v-vi.

³Eight meetings of the Serapionsbrüder were held between November 1818 and the spring of 1820. See Schnapp, pp. 108-110.

and paid their respects to Ludwig Tieck. But most of Wilhelm's time was spent in the composition of what were to be his final works: two operas, four plays, four stories and innumerable poems and small dramatic fragments for the children to perform at Sellendorf.¹

The first of the operas, Das entschlossene Mädchen (1816),² was an adaptation of a play of the same name by Count Alois von Brühl, the director of the Berliner Königliches Theater whom E.T.A. Hoffmann characterized as "Der Graue" in Seltsame Leiden eines Theaterdirektors. The second, a direct consequence of the meetings of the Serapionsbrüder, Der Liebhaber nach dem Tode (1817),³ was planned as a combined project for which Hoffmann was to write the music and Contessa the libretto. Contessa completed his task, but Hoffmann composed only a few passages. According to Houwald,⁴ J.P. Schmidt took over the task of writing the music after Hoffmann's death in 1822 and so the chance of Contessa's name as a librettist being linked with what Hoffmann had intended as his "masterpiece" was lost; Schmidt never completed his task.

The plays of this period are comedies: Der Schatz (1817),⁵ Ich bin meine

¹E.g. "Das Infantichord," Schriften, IX, p. 168.

²Schriften, VI, pp. 1-94. Opera in three acts with music by G. A. Schneider.

³Schriften, VII, pp. 29-156. Opera in three acts based on Calderón's El galán fantasma (1635).

⁴Schriften, I, p. viii. See also Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, ed. Friedrich Blume, Vol. XI (Kassel, 1963), pp. 1862-1863.

⁵Schriften, VI, pp. 95-174.

Schwester (1820)¹ and Das Quartettchen im Hause (1821-22).² In Wer zuletzt lacht, lacht am besten (1817),³ Contessa returned briefly to the autobiographical theme of Magister Rösslein, recurrent in many of his works, the inevitable subjugation of the male to the female, of which Contessa remained convinced, not without a touch of wry humour, since his marriage with Henriette:

Nicht allen Menschen gleich vertheilt er [der Himmel]
seine Gaben.

Das Weib muss immer Recht, der Mann stets Unrecht
haben,

Und so ist in der Welt denn gut Polizey.⁴

Das Bild der Mutter, the first of Contessa's last four narrative works, unfortunately does not sustain the high standard set in its first three chapters, i.e. those containing material originally part of the contributions to the Roman en quatre, written some two years earlier. The intensely imaginative passages praised by Rogge⁵ contrast sharply with the main body of the work which centres upon the concealment and revelation of various identities, narrated in a spirited style, but seldom concerned with the significance of events, only with the episodes themselves. Thus the chance of rendering the exhumation scene in the ruined chapel into the climactic peak of the whole story, unparalleled in grotesque horror and supernatural

¹Schriften, VIII, pp. 1-44.

²Schriften, VIII, pp. 79-180. A Czech translation (by E.F. Schmidlechner) can be found in Nové divadelní hry, XXIX (Prague, 1872).

³Schriften, VII, pp. 1-28.

⁴Schriften, VII, p. 28.

⁵See above, pp. 35-36.

menace, eludes Contessa: what begins ominously descends into the broad farce of Magister Rösslein. But it is with Vergib uns unsre Schuld that one detects the greatest similarities: it is as if Contessa had melted down his work of 1814 and, three years later, had poured it into the fresh mould of Das Bild der Mutter. A close analysis reveals no less than ten striking points of collusion between the two stories:

(a) The identity problem of a hero named Georg is central to both stories.

(b) Both heroes are aged twenty-three. Whilst Georg Vollrad of Vergib uns unsre Schuld has spent seventeen years at home and six years away, Georg Haberland of Das Bild der Mutter exhibits precisely the reverse record: six years at home and seventeen years of absence.

(c) Both heroes recall a brother-sister relationship of childhood with their beloved, whilst they are not in fact true brothers but foster-children in the family. In this way Contessa flecks their love with a delicate touch of incest.

(d) Both stories feature the hero's return to the scene of his childhood happiness after a lengthy absence.

(e) The "alien" element in each story is Italian: a good deal of the mystery in each emanates from the "strangeness" of the Italian figures.

(f) The use of the magic oak as an Ahnungsmotif is found early in both stories.

(g) Central to the conflict in both stories is the intended marriage of an elderly man to a young girl who is not only the object of a hero's love, but also grew up with him in childhood.

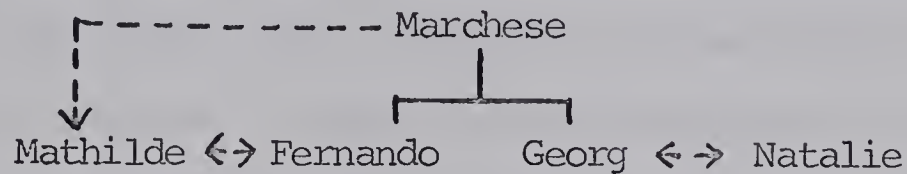
(h) In both tales a young man loves the girl to whom his father is betrothed. The relationship pattern in the stories is similar, although

in Das Bild der Mutter there are two sons instead of one:

Vergib uns unsre Schuld



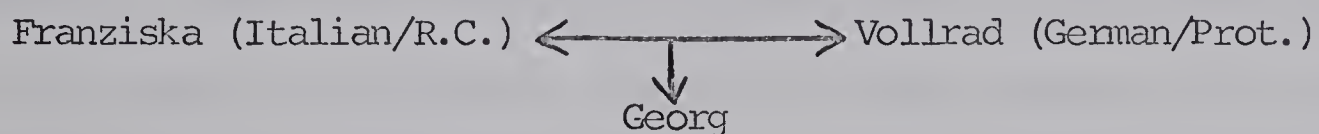
Das Bild der Mutter



(i) In the ultimate clarification of identities and origins, it emerges that a parental conflict of interests between Italian Catholicism and German Protestantism was responsible for abductions and adoptions, hence the loss of both heroes' identities.¹

(j) Both mothers faced the problems of being aliens in a strange country forced to educate their sons in the strange religion of their husbands; Contessa simply reverses the roles:

Vergib uns unsre Schuld



Das Bild der Mutter



¹This preoccupation with the religious issues of the Thirty Years' War even in stories not set in that period is yet another Baroque feature of Contessa's work, presumably attributable to his upbringing in Silesia, which was scarred more than any other region of Germany by the War, which was the main subject of Maria Theresia's quarrels with Frederick the Great and which as late as the Peace of Dresden (1745) reverted from Austria to Prussia with all the attendant religious ramifications of such a change.

These ten points constitute positive proof that Contessa never relied more heavily than in Das Bild der Mutter upon details of his earlier work. Subsequent chapters of this thesis will show that the tendency to borrow extensively from previous tales was so general a feature that one can even reduce most of his stories to one or two single formulae, subtly varied and peppered with repetitive motifs. But in these two tales of 1814 and 1817 we find, as nowhere else, a profusion of undisguised repetitions in detail; usually Contessa at least blurred the edges of his self-depredation: here he does not even bother to do that.

The next story, Die Schatzgräber (1819),¹ is no less superficial or episodic than Das Bild der Mutter; were it not for one or two masterly strokes, one could safely categorize it as light reading of the same calibre as Der Instinkt. It is the burlesque character of Herr Heinken (whose farcical entrance in the second chapter clearly bears the mark of Contessa the comic dramatist), the Hoffmannesque distortion of reality in the treasure-hunt, the vivid description of the one-eyed stranger and the parodying of themes used seriously in earlier works, which redeem this tale from complete shallowness. The last of these features, the element of caricature, is particularly interesting, since Die Schatzgräber is the last story in which Contessa employs recurrent material of any kind. This tale seems to mark a turning-point in his development as a writer. Having presumably, through constant recapitulation, exhausted his repertoire of

¹Schriften, VII, pp. 157-248. First publ. in Rheinisches Taschenbuch (1820), pp. 184-260. Also in: KGH, pp. 89-155; E.T.A. Hoffmann and C.W. Contessa, Tränen unterm Schutenhut, ed. Christian Kopp (Berlin and Buxtehude, 1947), pp. 71-132.

stock-characters, stock-motifs and stock-situations, he was left with two alternatives: either to travesty his past achievements or to break free completely from the habitual mode of creativity he had developed, perhaps unconsciously, over the years.

At first Contessa chose the former course of action, to which Die Schatzgräber attests; but his ultimate narrative, Die weisse Rose (1820),¹ indicates a complete break with former techniques. In this "tenderly pathetic little story,"² Contessa reached the zenith of his stylistic ability: the description of Wolfgang's discovery of his dead child propped up against a granite rock, the wind playing softly in her hair, some flowers in her lap, a lark scuttling to and fro agitatedly on the rock-face above her whilst, high above, a golden eagle wheels and wheels in the dawn sky, is a passage of sensitivity, taste and superb artistry in construction. Gone are the familiar conflicts and crises, the conventional polarization of issues, the emotional contortions and exaggerated postures; the supernatural exists only as a remote abstract possibility, never particularized and seen only as reflected in the natural elements. It is unlikely that Elisabeth ever found the legendary white rose, for in a sense she is the white rose herself: her belief in the legend obviates the need for the myth to be externalized. The supernatural has become

¹Schriften, VIII, pp. 45-78. First publ. in: W.G. Beckers Taschenbuch zum geselligen Vergnügen (1823). Also in: Allgemeine Theaterzeitung (1822), No. 120/127; KGH, pp. 59-87; Die weisse Rose. Eine romantische Geschichte (Friedeberg/Queis and Leipzig, 1923), 31 pp. Two chapters of an unfinished work, Aus Herr Balthasars Leben, probably written between 1821 and 1823, can be found in Schriften, VIII, pp. 181-231. A brief summary and comment is in Hewett-Thayer, 33.

²Hewett-Thayer, 29.

something purely subjective: any objective concretization of this element in the form perhaps of various phantasmagoria is therefore out of the question. As Wolfgang says of the ill-fated search for the flower, undertaken by Conrad and Elisabeth, whom he has just discovered:

Sieh, Conrad, Ihr seyd ausgegangen, die weisse
Rose zu suchen, aber ich habe sie gefunden!¹

Elisabeth contains the myth within herself, quite unlike any previous figure in Contessa's works; this confinement of the unreal to the limits of an individual imagination releases the writer from the obligation to polarize the real and the unreal in the external environment of his characters. For Contessa, insofar as he was a Romantic, the development of this technique constituted a radical breakthrough, a total divorce from the techniques of E.T.A. Hoffmann. It is tragic that he did not live long enough to develop these ideas further, for they possibly were indicative of his final achievement of maturity as a writer. In his Brief an den Herrn Kammergerichtsrat Hoffmann in Berlin which prefaced Die Schatzgräber, Contessa humorously rejected Hoffmann's Fantasiestücke: " . . . sie treiben es zu toll," Contessa wrote, " . . . Fantasie! Aus der Fantasie kommt eben alle Confusion in der Welt her."² No scholar seems to have considered the new-found technique of internalization in Die weisse Rose as a serious implementation of the jocular protestations in this letter. Always Contessa is underestimated: always his wit is mistaken for flippancy.

Julius Hitzig was at Wilhelm Contessa's bedside in a Berlin clinic

¹Schriften, VIII, p. 73.

²Schriften, VII, pp. 160, 162.

when he died on 2 June 1825, in extreme pain, his ashen face illuminated grotesquely by the sporadic flashes of a violent electrical storm. The epitaph on his grave in St. Hedwig's cemetery read:

Als Freund den Freunden, als Mensch allen, die
ihn kannten, als Dichter dem ganzen Deutschland
theuer und unvergesslich.¹

There is deep irony in the fact that not only has Germany totally forgotten Contessa as a writer, but even his grave has long since vanished and with it those few words which epitomized his life and his works.

¹Schriften, I, p. vi.

CHAPTER II

THE PATTERN OF RECURRENCE

Wilhelm Contessa was a repetitive writer. My analysis of his tales has revealed that, possibly because of his "grosser Hang zur Bequemlichkeit,"¹ having formulated in Meister Dietrich an acceptable pattern, he modelled the rest of his narrative works with certain exceptions upon this precedent.² Only in his Märchen did he deviate markedly in the imitative habit from this pattern, and even in two of these, Haushahn und Paradiesvogel and Das Schwert und die Schlangen, one finds instances of the recurrent formula, reduced significantly in dimension and inserted as a solitary episode, albeit one central to the development of the plot.

The contours of Contessa's formula are not complex: five components linked causally constitute the framework of his stories. An unstable personality becomes totally subservient to a daemonic urge generally identifiable with sexual desire; this longing then encounters an obstacle to its fulfilment; the obstacle is removed by a criminal act; the criminal is overcome by a massive guilt-complex culminating in various possible actions (renunciation of desires, flight, contrition, etc.); finally the criminal is redeemed through the power of ideal love. The main variation of the

¹Ernst von Houwald, "Einige Bruchstücke aus C.W. Contessas Leben," W.G. Beckers Taschenbuch zum geselligen Vergnügen, ed. Kind (1828), p. 240.

²The earlier tales, Manon and Der Instinkt, contain embryonic fragments of the pattern (see Appendix C. for details); the last tales, Die Schatzgräber and Die weisse Rose, exhibit no similarities. None of the four is truly relevant to the discussion in this chapter. Magister Rösslein, being true Unterhaltungsliteratur, is not really significant.

basic pattern is of negligible significance: often the criminal act is not actually carried out; the sins of the offender are sins of intention alone. But this does not preclude the occurrence of gross manifestations of guilt and the need for redemption.

The results of my findings in this area have been tabulated elsewhere;¹ this chapter is best understood when read in conjunction with the table to which it is merely ancillary.

A. Daemonic Drive

There is a passage in Meister Dietrich where the "man in green" functions as a catalyst for all the polarities latent in the story, when he says:

. . . die Weiber sind es in diesem Leben, die uns
hinauf oder hinunter ziehen. Die Wahl ist Euer!²

In the context of Meister Dietrich, he implies that Dietrich must choose between Countess Rovero, who represents the negative, irrational, daemonic principle, and Kunigunde, who is the archetypal passive, vulnerable, devout wife. Dietrich makes his choice (the Countess), but it is not a rational one: it is the instinctive choice of a man already doomed: "sein bethörtes Herz zog ihn am andern Morgen wieder zur schönen Gräfin" ³ And from this moment on, the tale becomes one of blind passion, total self-abandonment and death. At the mere touch of the Countess' hand, Dietrich becomes a raging maniac: the story of the total disintegration of his personality is a study in fanaticism.

¹Viz. Appendix C., p. 109.

²C.W. Contessa, Schriften, ed. E. von Houwald (Leipzig, 1826), III, p. 154. Subsequently referred to as Schriften, together with vol. no.

³Ibid.

But Dietrich is an artist: for him the Countess is more than just a stimulant to his sexuality, she is herself of the essence of his poetic yearning, she is essential to his art. Since she is the subject of that art, he must remain distanced from her as an artist, although he cannot as a man, and this is his undoing. He yearns to be synthesized with the subject of his art: such a synthesis of course negates the artist, and when that subject evidently represents the daemonic life-principle, then the synthesis must destroy the man. Dietrich, together with Willbrand of Der schwarze See, is actually an exception amongst Contessa's heroes insofar as his Sehnsucht exhibits a dualistic motivation, here that of the erotic and the artistic. Normally the daemonic urge is synonymous with the desire for sexual gratification in a permanent (physical) relationship with a woman, sometimes for political power and influence or for material wealth, rarely for the realization of the goals of Romantic yearning, but never, except in Meister Dietrich, for fusion with the artistic subject. And this coupling of aesthetic and biological processes occurs nowhere else in Contessa's tales; indeed the combination of any two bases for irrational behaviour is only found in one other story, Der schwarze See, in which Willbrand's self-surrender to the evil nixie of the lake seems motivated partly, in his desperation, by the desire for financial security and partly by his fascination with the supernatural powers. Whereas, in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel, the Kammerrat is drawn to the mountain-treasure by his greed, the Professor is magnetized by the possibility of finding the ultimate secret of existence (which Rubezahl later reveals to be death): in this way Contessa normally separates the divergent motivations of the daemonic drive where more than one motive exists. The range of this divergence in daemonic impulses is best illustrated simply with a brief

discussion of their characteristics as found in the remaining tales.

Wolf in Der Todesengel, Georg Vollrad in Vergib uns unsre Schuld and Fernando¹ of Das Bild der Mutter all resemble Dietrich the man, but not Dietrich the artist: that is to say, they are all three possessed of a violent obsession for a woman, an obsession which demands physical satisfaction (in marriage) and which will tolerate no hindrance. The sexuality of this drive is most evident in Georg Vollrad's love for Klara and yet the drive is in Georg's case seen at its most complex. Whereas Fernando's drive is only briefly sketched and Wolf's is extremely straightforward, Georg's is paradoxical. On his return to Magdeburg, Georg senses a total change in his fraternal relationship with Klara, obviously because she has achieved sexual maturity in his absence: their intimacy now has erotic potential. Georg becomes ". . . sich oft selbst ein Räthsel . . ." ² and he does not dare to undertake an analysis of his own emotions. This is the fundamental weakness in his character which permits the illicit desire for Klara to grow unchecked until he can no longer contain it and it eventually dictates his behaviour; he has, in his own words, "die Hölle . . . in meiner Brust. . . ." ³ and he feeds the flames masochistically with erotic images:

Er sah sie in den verschiedensten Formen und
Verhältnissen, . . . er sah sie vor sich stehen,
wie sie ihm vor kurzen erst erschienen [das ent-
fesselte, reiche Haar floss in tausend Locken und
Ringeln über den nur halb bedeckten Busen nieder] . .
. . Er drückte seine brennenden Lippen auf ihren
Mund und Busen⁴

¹The love of the two brothers for their stepmother in Haselmeyer's first play belongs also to this category of daemonic drive.

²Schriften, V, p. 89.

⁴Schriften, V, p. 115.

³Schriften, V, p. 111.

But whilst Georg's passion is the most intense of those heroes operated like puppets by their own sexual impulses, it is also the most complex. On the one hand he wants to kiss Klara's breasts and yet on the other:

Sein Blut hätt' er darum hingeben mögen . . . ja nur
den Saum ihres Kleides zu berühren.¹

Georg seeks both total physical possession of Klara as her lover and yet supreme distance from her when apotheosized. This complex adoration is qualitatively very different from the simple drive of Wolf, since it can be analyzed into two main components: one sexual, the other quasi-religious; one physical, the other meta-physical; one realistic, the other idealistic. This inner dichotomy is what originally made Georg at once shy of Klara and yet magnetized by her. And his jealousy of Herr Vollrad operates on both planes: he tortures himself with the thought of Herr Vollrad enjoying Klara's body and at the same time he cannot abide the idea that Herr Vollrad will "desecrate" her by making love to her. It must be remembered that these are only two aspects of the same love; we are not dealing with two distinct motives as in Meister Dietrich.²

In Das Schwert und die Schlangen, the daemonic drive of King Giselherr is of a very different nature: it is a power-drive:

. . . als sein Vater starb, da liess er seine
ältern Brüder beide heimlich ermorden, weil
ihn nach der Krone gelüstete, er liess sie er-
morden mit Weib und Kind³

What actually triggers the Sehnsucht and Leidenschaft of these figures

¹Ibid.

²A similar, though undeveloped dualism exists in Fernando's drive: ". . . jetzt siegte die Leidenschaft . . . er streckte die zitternden Arme nach Mathilden aus . . . 'nur ihres Kleides Saum lasst mich berühren!'" (Schriften, VI, p. 273).

³Schriften, V, pp. 258-259.

is not clear; the complex instinctual mechanisms of Contessa's daemonic characters remain concealed: only behavioural symptoms can be seen in the tales. But it is clear that the daemonic drive, self-surrender of the personality to a monstrous will to possess, is more or less synonymous with insanity. With some characters it is overtly referred to as Wahnsinn, with others Contessa employs the subtler language of Romantic symbolism, for example in the nocturnal haunting of King Giselherr by two large snakes or in the Professor's excursion into Rùbezah1's Dantesque inferno:

Da streckte die Gestalt ihre Hand aus und
berührte seine Stirn, und das Haar auf seinem
Haupte ward zur Flamme, die hoch emporloderte.¹

Certainly an initial instability exists within each of the characters prey to daemonic urges. For example, Dietrich is all too easily disturbed by his discussion with the "man in green" about fate, free-will and the yearning for an indefinable "something" missing from his life; Wolf has strange smouldering eyes together with conflict and discontent within; Willbrand at the very beginning of Der schwarze See appears totally irrational even in his domestic life, a manic depressive burdened with financial problems he appears incapable of solving, well aware though of the dangers of his temperament:

Einen steilen Berg hinunter geht der Weg nach
der Hölle; wer ein Mal seinen Fuss darauf
gesetzt, der muss auch wider seinen Willen
immer weiter! - vom Trunk zum Spiel, vom
Spiel zum Betrug, vom Betrug zum Stehlen -
nun, was bleibt dann noch? - zum Raub, zum Mord!²

This unstable emotional state can be found in all the daemonic characters; it appears to be a precondition for the development of their insatiable passion.

¹Schriften, IV, p. 310.

²Schriften, V, p. 159.

B. Obstacle and Crime

Throughout the tales in which the daemonic drive syndrome is found, once the blind urge develops such momentum that it becomes uncontrollable--normally at that precise moment when the conscience becomes defunct--then any obstacle in its path must be eliminated. This collision between a dynamic will and the conscious resistance of those opposed to its acquisitive thrust inevitably results in a criminal act, or at least in the desire to carry out such an act. At this stage in the development of the driving passion of his characters, there is little variation in the external action of Contessa's tales. In straightforward love-relationships the heroes must either eliminate parental opposition to marriage (e.g. Wolf's murder of Meister Trymm) or their rivals (e.g. Dietrich's murder of the Count and attempted murder of the "man in green"). In the former case, blind anger at being thwarted precipitates the action; in the latter, jealousy. In cases where the parent who impedes the marriage is also the rival suitor, both anger and jealousy are combined (e.g. when Georg almost murders Vollrad, when Fernando challenges the Marchese and when the brothers in Haselmeyer's first play plot to murder the old king). Georg Vollrad's mood just prior to the murder attempt is typical: here we find the neutralized conscience, the anger and the jealousy:

Ein heftiges Zittern überfiel ihn; er stand und schwankte zwischen dem Ruf der Leidenschaft, die ihn vorwärts trieb und der erwachenden Stimme des Gewissens, die ihn zurückhielt, aber die Leidenschaft siegte. . . . Der lang genährte Groll richtete sich auf in seiner Brust Es war ihm, als läg' ein bitterer Vorwurf gegen ihn in Vollrads Miene, aber dieser Vorwurf erbitterte nur die rasende Leidenschaft. Wer gab seinem Alter ein Recht auf den Schatz der Jugend?¹

¹Schriften, V, p. 117.

When the daemonic drive is not simply a manifestation of heterosexual love, but rather one of ideal love, of a Romantic yearning to discover the very foundation of existence (e.g. the Professor's dazed pursuit of Paradiesvogel and Nachtigall or Willbrand's agonized infatuation with the evil nixie), then the obliteration of rational opposition seems initiated by sheer insanity: no separate elements of anger or jealousy can be distinguished. For example, when the Professor leaps at Caroline with a dagger, the description reads simply: "in seinem rasenden Wahnsinn sprang er auf sie zu."¹ And when Willbrand tries to murder his wife and daughter, his language becomes incoherent:

Seine Stimme war laut und grässlich geworden . . .
 seine Augen rollten . . . "Heisa! . . . nun
 kommt die Musik, nun kommen die Gäste, nun geht's
 zum Tanz! . . . so geht's lustig! Heisa! Die ganze
 Welt fängt an sich zu drehen . . . Frisch, mein
 Jäger! Hast du nicht Blut genug vergossen in deinem
 Leben? Blut ist Blut! Nichts weiter. Frisch, nur zu!
 Es wird mir dunkel vor den Augen. Nur zu! Spielt
 wacker auf! Nun gilt's!"²

To this simple pattern only one exception can be found; even then the unusual direction of the drive is soon reversed and replaced by the conventional urge to kill. Before challenging his father to a duel, Fernando in Das Bild der Mutter introverts his destructive drive, turning it towards himself, sublimating his criminal tendency in suicidal mania. But this mood quickly changes when the Marchese derides him, provoking him to anger, to an exchange of insults and ultimately to a fight.

¹Schriften, IV, p. 311.

²Schriften, V, pp. 189-190.

C. Guilt and Death-wish

It is after the execution of the criminal act or at the moment of realistic awareness of the horrendous deed about to be carried out that the pattern of recurrence becomes a little more complicated, for the reactions of Contessa's daemonic automatons to their crimes vary a good deal. For those who actually commit murder, the act of killing is usually cathartic: they are released from the pressure of their insane drive and their rational processes appear to function again more or less normally. This leads them to an examination of conscience and to subsequent feelings of guilt. Those who do not actually remove the obstacles in the way of their drive are usually prevented from doing so by the intervention of some positive force which neutralizes their insanity and restores them to their senses. As a result they experience feelings of remorse and guilt quite as intense as those felt by the murderers themselves, though usually less prolonged. The next stage, the act of contrition, can take many forms: inordinate obsession with their own unworthiness, total renunciation of the original object of their passionate love, flight, persecution-mania, self-immolation and the death-wish, all these and several combinations of these constitute the recurrent symptoms of guilt in those redeemed from their daemonic nature.

With Dietrich this redemption is a slower, more complex process than with most of the heroes. His behaviour after the murder of Count Rovero is characteristic: he feels tremendous guilt even when pouring the poison into the Count's glass ("... als zischte die Hölle aus dem schäumenden Trank herauf.")¹ and he flees immediately not just from the scene of his

¹Schriften, III, p. 183.

crime but from society at large, so strong is his feeling of alienation. But no immediate catharsis seems to follow the act: he still feels the same passionate love for the Countess, although it is now accompanied by symptoms exhibited by later heroes only after their release from irrational pressures. And yet Dietrich's conscience is again functioning so effectively that he feels the desire to escape even from himself: he is so nauseated by his own crime that he already nurtures a death-wish. Then it becomes clear, from his vision of the pastoral landscape symbolic of his youth, that he has in fact transposed his yearning from the Countess back to Kunigunde. His love for the Countess is now purely a matter of physical expediency motivated quite rationally by a genuine belief that his love is reciprocated and that he actually deserves to possess her, since he has eliminated an unwanted husband. Consequently, when the Countess reveals that she wishes the distance between them (which, at least on the artistic plane, gave birth to Dietrich's love) to be total and permanent, he is quick to perceive the impossibility of consummation and desires immediate reunion with Kunigunde (i.e. death). The complexity of Dietrich's case lies primarily in the fact that his daemonic drive is then reactivated by Adelbert's insinuations, later proved to be well grounded, that the "man in green" is the Countess' lover. Once again: "eine Hölle erwachte in seiner Brust. Wahnsinn umnebelte seine Sinne."¹ He attempts to murder the "man in green," fails, but unintentionally kills the Countess in the process. And only then, after this second crime which actually destroys the evil principle of Dietrich's existence, does the catharsis occur:

¹Schriften, III, p. 197.

Von diesem Augenblick war er in seinem innersten Wesen verwandelt. Die schwere Blutschuld . . . ward nun gebüsst und er mit Gott versöhnt und mit sich selbst.¹

Wolf's behaviour after the death of Meister Trymm is so undaemonic in its circumspection that the cathartic effect of the murder is not to be doubted. Even after the intervention of three years' absence, he is extremely wary of revealing to Maria any facts about his past which might damage his chances of re-establishing an intimate relationship with her. It could be argued that the fact of their having actually consummated their love soon after Trymm's death is the real reason for Wolf's return to rational behaviour; on the other hand, his avoidance of self-incrimination through flight from the scene of his crime is evidence that he was thinking clearly prior to the consummation of his love. His subsequent behaviour suggests that the desire to flee must indeed have been powerful, although consciously resisted. It is Wolf's introversion, his ability to obstruct deliberately the expression of his true feelings, which causes the delay between catharsis and cathartic effect (i.e. guilt). Only after the death of Rudolf does he exhibit symptoms of guilt beyond those of the desire to escape from reality and the renunciation of his beloved; only after he has destroyed the trust implicit in his relationship with Maria does he, in his Angstzustand, reveal his feelings of unworthiness, which involve a sense of alienation from God and even from Maria herself, whose purity he does not even dare contaminate with his touch ("Ich bin ein Ungeheuer, von Gott verworfen und verflucht. . . . Meine Nähe bringt Verderben.").² Hitherto he had sublimated his guilt in fatherhood, and now his child is dead.

¹Schriften, III, p. 198.

²Schriften, V, p. 56.

The would-be murderers exhibit far less complex pathological patterns than Dietrich and Wolf, for they are always aided in their attempts to purge themselves of their guilt by other (rationally motivated) characters. The Professor is released from his madness by Caroline and, even when he is overcome with immediate remorse, the sensible Caroline tugs him away from the menace of Rübezahl's kingdom:

Caroline . . . als sie ihren Mann mit brennendem Kopfe daherstürzen sah, lief ihm entgegen, griff muthig und entschlossen in die Flamme und drückte sie aus Der Professor sank, zur Besinnung kommend, reuevoll vor ihr nieder; doch sie hob ihn schnell empor . . . und zog ihn mit sich fort durch die wogende Menge.¹

Willbrand's madness disappears abruptly just as he is about to attempt murder for the second time, when first his daughter and then his wife selflessly exhort him to kill the one, but spare the other:

Als nun aber Willbrand Mutter und Tochter also vor sich liegen sah, Jedes bereit für das Andere freudig in den Tod zu gehen, da lösete der Anblick solcher Liebe plötzlich den feindseligen Wahnsinn, der ihn umstrickt hielt.²

And Willbrand's guilt is externalized in the supernatural forces which pursue him to his death; his relationship with his family is not destroyed. The rest of his life is simply spent trying desperately to evade the wrath of the evil nixie whom he has wronged by his reconciliation with Gertrud; he has no time to be plagued more than momentarily by his resurrected conscience.

Georg Vollrad is redeemed from his drive to kill by the love and the pious (Catholic) faith of Therese ("Gebenedeiet sey die allerheiligste

¹Schriften, IV, p. 311.

²Schriften, V, p. 191.

Jungfrau und die heilige Klara, die mich ausersehen, diesen da zu retten aus der Gewalt des Bösen.").¹ During his psychosomatic relapse after the attempt on his father's life, he has more than just familial love to aid him in his crisis of guilt: Therese's grandmother makes the sign of the cross over him every night, claiming that the Mother of God will save him. When he awakens from twelve days in a deep coma, he is completely purged of his madness.

Fernando is saved from the duel with his father by the intercession of his apotheosized mother:

Doch der gute Engel dieser Stunde stand ja
sichtbar über ihnen, und zwang die aus der
Hölle aufzüngelnde Flamme wieder in den
Abgrund zurück!²

A total reconciliation swiftly follows, after which no apparent manifestations of guilt can be seen.

It is important to remember that, whilst the death-wish per se occurs frequently in Contessa's tales, it is sometimes merely an extension of the daemonic will, rather than a manifestation of the guilt-complex that ensues from the suspension of the daemonic drive. There are therefore two specific categories of death-wish to be found in the tales (one daemonic, the other sublime); they must not be confused.³ For example, in the heat of his passionate love for the Countess, Dietrich exhibits a strong masochistic tendency which is in no way associated with his desire to be

¹Schriften, V, p. 119.

²Schriften, VI, p. 275.

³The willingness of Gertrud and Elisabeth to die for one another at the hands of Willbrand is expedient rather than sublime and, for this reason, can hardly be described as a death-wish. If it were, then it would of course form a third category.

reunited with Kunigunde in death:

Er . . . stürzte zu ihren Füßen, in Thränen
ausbrechend, und umschlang ihre Kniee.
Entrüstet wollte sie sich von ihm losmachen,
er aber hielt sie nur fester und stammelte:
"Gebt mir den Tod! Ich kann das Leben ohne
Euch nicht länger tragen!"¹

This type of death-wish is an adjunct to the relentless drive towards self-destruction, inherent even in the Professor's enticement deep into the realm of Rübezahl by Paradiesvogel and the vision of Nachtigall; the sublime death-wish on the other hand is often an essential part of the process of self-reintegration possible only after the daemonic will has ceased to function.

D. Redemption

Just as the two categories of death-wish must not be confused, so too "redemption" (as mentioned earlier in the sense of release from the daemonic drive), whilst similar, is not synonymous with the ultimate redemption of Contessa's defaulting heroes through the power of pure love. The extrication of a man ensnared in his own will differs qualitatively from the intercession before God of an apotheosized female to ensure his salvation and reunion with her after death; it differs too from the vicarious self-immolation of a man who dies to save the lives of those whom he loves. The former kind of redemption may be but a temporary release; the latter is for eternity.

Contessa places didactic emphasis in all his stories upon the redemptive

¹Schriften, III, p. 190.

power of a love which is allied to the rational life-principle.¹ All his erring heroes are redeemed ultimately by such love; the only figures finally to surrender themselves consciously to evil are not mortals.² There are three modes of ultimate redemption in the tales: through love in death, through vicarious death or through sublime love without the involvement of death.

In Meister Dietrich and Der Todesengel, the redemption of Dietrich and Wolf is effected in death through the love of Kunigunde and Maria respectively. Of these, the intercession of Kunigunde is the most explicitly Catholic of all such sublime acts by Contessa's heroines. Dietrich, on the eve of his execution, dreams a Baroque dream which anticipates his search for forgiveness, his meeting with God ("der alte Meister"), who shows compassion towards him ("'. . . warum hast du deinen rechten Weg verlassen? Doch ich, dein Freund und Kunstgenosse, will mich dein erbarmen.'"),³ his ascent towards heaven, borne upward by angels, and his vision of the Mother of God together with Kunigunde in heaven:

. . . der Maler fühlte sich mit seinem
Gefährten in die Höhe gehoben und schwebte
in der Glorie aufwärts. Da erschien oben,
sie zu empfangen, eine weibliche Gestalt,
gleich der Heiligen auf dem Bilde in der
Kirche [i.e. the Blessed Virgin]. . . .
Und da der Maler nochmals hinschaute, sah

¹There is a close link between the rational (divine, Christian) life-principle and innocent, selfless love (caritas) on the one hand and between the irrational (daemonic, Romantic) life-principle and sexual passion (eros) on the other. A study of such religious didacticism in Contessa's works would be most rewarding.

²I.e., the Devil himself in Magister Rösslein and the "Fremder Jäger" in Der schwarze See.

³Schriften, III, p. 201.

er noch eine andre an ihrer Seite, und siehe! er erkannte Kunigunden, die ihm freundlich zulächelte, und ihre Arme ihm entgegenstreckte.¹

In death he is united with her ("... und ein rascher Strich vereinigte ihn mit Kunigunden.")² and the power of their sublime love is again emphasised by Contessa in a peculiarly Catholic fashion: pilgrims who offer devout prayers before Dietrich's painting of the Mother of God leave the chapel marvellously fortified. Dietrich, the prototype for all the daemonic heroes, has thus completed the cycle from stability through daemonic drive, crime and guilt to reconciliation and a new-found stability on an elevated plane.

The didacticism found in this ending constitutes in itself a negation of Romantic yearning: all Contessa's tales are emphatically anti-Romantic in the sense that they contain a moral that is not merely Christian but also ascetic. The Romanticism of Contessa is confined to his literary technique, to his predilection for supernatural motifs and to his interest in abnormal psychology, whereas his ethical view is rooted deep in the religious fervour of the Silesian Baroque. In Meister Dietrich, a tale set like so many of Contessa's against the background of the politico-religious issues of the Thirty Years' War, some drunken soldiers can be heard singing:

Die Welt ist eitel Lumperei,
häng dich an nichts, so bist du frei.
Gewiss ist jeglichem der Tod,
drum mach' das Leben dir nicht Noth.³

¹Schriften, III, p. 202.

²Schriften, III, p. 203.

³Schriften, III, pp. 196-197.

This Vanitas-concept, reminiscent of Gryphius, together with the Diesseits-Jenseits polarity, the view of love as a daemonic urge leading to crime, the conflicts between Protestant and Catholic, the contrast between the desolation of the cities and ideal life in the country, the Freundschafts-motif of Haushahn und Paradiesvogel,¹ the conventional pastoral landscapes (excluding of course the Riesengebirge tales) and Bunyanesque dreams, all belong to Baroque rather than Romantic literature. In a sense, Contessa polarizes the Romantic and the Baroque in his works, viewing the unworldliness of the latter positively. The normality of his endings is a Baroque normality; the abnormality of the daemonic drive is Romantic.

In the tales Vergib uns unsre Schuld and Der schwarze See redemption is brought about through the sacrificial death of the hero in a selfless act of vicarious love. Willbrand dies in the flood-waters trying desperately to save the life of his daughter, whom, together with his wife, he has deeply wronged. His redemption is implicit in his death, since devotion to his child cancels his fear of the nixie's revenge. His actions are thus clearly governed by the divine life-principle: both Elisabeth's life and his soul are saved. Georg Vollrad's death, thanks largely to the technical blemishes of Vergib uns unsre Schuld already discussed elsewhere, is less esoteric:² he is run through with a halberd whilst defending his loved ones

¹"O Ideal der wahren Freundschaft! . . . du edler Dualismus edler Seelen! . . . Wie begeisterst, wie entzündest du mich und hebst mich zugleich mit dem Geliebten hinaus über das Leben in die Unendlichkeit!" (Schriften, IV, p. 281). Cf. Simon Dach's celebrated poem, Perstet amicitiae semper venerabile foedus!

²See above p.32. The reduction of the tale to a mere adventure story by the last chapter detracts from the symbolic significance of Georg's death.

during a skirmish with Imperial troops and dies in fulfilment of the prophetic dream which opened the tale:

"Mein heisser Wunsch ist mir gewährt; ich sterbe für dich [Klara] und meinen Vater, und dieses strömende Blut wäscht mich rein von meiner Schuld. . . . Bete für mich, Klara! . . . Vater, gieb mir deinen Segen!" und indem dieser ihm weinend die Hände auf das Haupt legte, brachen seine Augen und der Segen des Vaters geleitete seine Seele hinüber von der blutigen Erde in das Land des Friedens.¹

The third mode of redemption, through a renewal of love in life rather than in death, is found in all the remaining stories under consideration. The two symbols of Christian love, the magic sword ("wie ein Kreuz gebildet . . . auf seiner Klinge gleichfalls ein goldenes Kreuz")² and the magic alpine-rose, in Das Schwert und die Schlangen are both instrumental in the redemption of Giselherr, which, in itself, is ascetic in conception:

König Giselherr aber bat seinen Bruder, dass er ihm vergönne ein Kloster zu erbauen im Walde an der Stelle, wo er einst die Schlangenhölle gefunden, damit er dort, nachdem er ein Christ geworden, den Rest seines Lebens dazu verwenden möge, sich mit dem Himmel zu versöhnen.³

In Haushahn und Paradiesvogel it is the renewal of parental love after the discovery of his lost child which finally redeems the Professor (" . . . jeden Widerspruch zwischen ihm und seiner Frau glich die gemeinschaftliche Liebe zu ihrem Kinde aus: . . ."),⁴ for this represents his final rejection of

¹Schriften, V, pp. 152, 153-154.

²Schriften, V, p. 293. See the section in Chapter III below on "The Symbols of Exorcism" (p. 70).

³Schriften, V, p. 305.

⁴Schriften, VI, p. 324.

Romantic Sehnsucht and his adoption of the divine (Christian) life-principle in parenthood.

Fernando finds ultimate redemption through the acceptance of his father's renewed love for him; this is made clear in the apotheosis of Rosamunda:

Durch das Fenster aber warf die Abendsonne
ihre letzten, goldnen Strahlen auf das Bild,
und von leichten Wolken emporgetragen, von
überirdischem Glanz umflossen, stand die
Mutter in seliger Wonne und Verklärung und
lächelte segnend herab auf den Vater mit
seinen Söhnen.¹

E. The Märchen

Just as Meister Dietrich established a firm precedent for the majority of Contessa's subsequent works, so too Haushahn und Paradiesvogel served as the prototype of his three children's tales: both Das Gastmahl and Das Schwert und die Schlangen contain features of the original Märchen. Since they do not belong exclusively to the pattern of the Märchen, most of these recurrent features are discussed in Chapter III of this thesis. Some of them are common to all three tales (e.g. the appearance of Rübezahl, the polarization of the divine and the daemonic, the symbols of exorcism); some are absent from Das Gastmahl, but can be found in the other two tales (e.g. the legend of the giants and the externalization of schizophrenic tendencies). Only one recurrent theme, found in all three tales, is exclusive to the Märchen: the forest episode where travellers lose their way and encounter supernatural phenomena of various kinds.²

¹Schriften, VI, p. 277.

²In the first chapter of Das Schwert und die Schlangen, Rübezahl (Meister Ezzelino) seemingly goes astray in the forest; this is of course mere subterfuge which lends a touch of irony to the story.

Regrettably it is not within the limited scope of this thesis to introduce at this point the copious quotations needed to demonstrate the remarkable degree of collusion between the three tales. No amount of paraphrase or comment is a satisfactory substitute for a close parallel reading of the texts.¹ All that can be permitted here is one lengthy quotation from Haushahn und Paradiesvogel and a companion quotation from Das Gastmahl, two passages which illustrate the extent of Contessa's self-plagiaristic tendency. Both passages occur prior to nightfall, that is to say, before the forest reveals itself to be hostile environment:

Der Tag war heiss; eine erquickende Kühlung wehte ihnen aus den hohen Laubgewölben entgegen; gastlich schien der Wald sie einzuladen in seine Schatten. Aller Furcht und Sorge ledig, führen sie hinein. Der Professor, den die Hitze des Tages ein wenig niedergedrückt hatte, sog jetzt den frischen belebenden Waldduft mit vollen Zügen in sich, der seine ermattete Fantasie wieder mächtig unter der Asche hervorhauchte. Bedeutungsvoll erklang ihm der Ruf der Vögel und das weitschallende Klopfen des Baumspechts; die Bäume ringsumher belebten sich ihm allgemach; sie neigten sich grüssend vor ihm, ihr leises Flüstern ward ihm mit jedem Augenblick verständlicher, . . . [Haushahn und Paradiesvogel].²

Es war kühl und ergötzlich in dem Walde. Wilibald und Anna gingen mit Lust in die grünen Schatten hinein, und hatten ihre Freude an dem hellen, halb durchsichtigen Laubgewölbe der alten Buchen über ihnen, und an den runden goldnen Lichtflecken, die auf dem Moosteppich zu ihren Füßen hin und wieder spielten. Dazwischen horchten sie, wie die Vögel sangen und wie der Baumspecht klopfte, dass es weithin wie die Schläge einer Axt durch den Wald schallte. Auch blieben sie wohl von Zeit zu Zeit stehen, um das leise Rauschen in den Baumwipfeln

¹The relevant passages are: Schriften, IV, pp. 250-267, 291-300 (Haushahn und Paradiesvogel); V, pp. 212-228 (Das Gastmahl), 272-277 (Das Schwert und die Schlangen).

²Schriften, IV, p. 251.

zu vernehmen, das ihnen yorkam, wie die Waldstimme,
die ihnen gern etwas Geheimnisvolles vertrauen
möchte, wenn sie nur die Sprache recht verstünden.
[Das Gastmahl].¹

Beyond this point the following sequence occurs in both tales:

1. Night falls. 2. The way is lost. 3. An abortive attempt is made to retrace the path which should at some point intersect the correct route. 4. The trees become increasingly dense. 5. A tree is climbed for orientation. 6. The view from this tree reveals forest all around. 7. A distant landmark is sighted from which better orientation might be gained. 8. An attempt is made to reach the landmark.

It is now that the supernatural element becomes apparent in all three tales, in two instances accompanied by a violent storm, and the plots diverge. Later, a parallelism (as close as that of the forest scene quoted above) is discernible in the sights and sounds of the phantasmagoric hunt in Das Gastmahl and Das Schwert und die Schlangen.

¹Schriften, V, pp. 212-213.

CHAPTER III
RECURRENT ASPECTS

A. Divine versus Daemonic

1. The Symbols of Exorcism

In several of Contessa's tales, characters perform the courageous act of conjuring away evil influences with the use of certain recurrent symbols. These are usually borrowed from folk-lore; even the obvious power of the crucifix, whilst recognized liturgically by the Church when wielded by a cleric in minor orders, is more directly connected with popular white magic as used here. The cockerel, although undoubtedly linked with Peter's denial of Christ, is identifiable in the tales with the anti-Romantic, "prosaic" realists like Caroline and Anna, rather than with any biblical heritage, though their "philistinism" is essentially linked to their devoutness.

In Haushahn und Paradiesvogel Nachtigall gives Caroline three flowers (a passion-flower, a rose and an evergreen) with the words "glaube, liebe, hoffe!"¹ and henceforward they become symbols of a divine grace which redeems characters from evil influences. Dr. Schachtheimer (Rübezahl) disappears when they are held aloft after his attempts to lead Caroline from

¹Schriften, IV, p. 290. Cf. I Cor. xiii.13.

righteousness;¹ their strange incandescence lights the way to the giant's tomb, enabling Caroline and the Professor to save the Kammerrat from the wages of his avarice and to find their lost child. Finally the light guides all four from the underworld. Haushahn too causes the phantasmagoric hordes to vanish instantly when he, totally identifiable with Caroline's realistic nature, stretches up from his perch on her shoulder and crows loudly three times ("Ein Donnerschlag krachte durch die Gewölbe. Im Nu war das ganze Gewirr um sie her zerstoßen und verschwunden.").² By so doing, he saves Caroline from falling prey to the same madness that possessed the Professor; his bird, Paradiesvogel, identifiable with his Romantic nature, simply lured him into insanity.³

In Der Todesengel another flower, this time a violet, a spring flower which has grown on a grave, is given to Wolf by the old neighbour who is convinced of Wolf's guilt in the murder of Meister Trymm, ". . . dass du mir das Lämmlein da [Maria] nicht frisst." She continues: "halte sie wohl unter Gewahrsam, denn sie plaudern gar wunderliche Dinge. Was der Winter

¹Countless legends tell of devils, witches, etc. being dispelled instantly at the mere sight of the crucifix. That not a word passes between Schachtheimer and Caroline at this point suggests that these flowers are essentially identifiable with the crucifix (especially in the light of Nachtigall's words), but that Contessa prefers a less obviously didactic symbol more appropriate to the Romantic Märchen. Schachtheimer too is momentarily identifiable with Satan: see "Rübezahl," below pp. 98-99.

²Schriften, IV, p. 314.

³In folk-legends the cockerel is a common exorcistic symbol. "Wenn der Hahnenschrei erschallt, werden die davon überraschten Hexen oder Riesen verscheucht oder zu Stein," (Otto Henne-Am Rhyn, Die deutsche Volkssage [Leipzig, 1879], p. 131). The obvious reason for this, well illustrated in Das Gastmahl, is the association between a cock's crow and dawn when, of course, the supernatural powers cease to hold sway. Peter's denial of Christ is probably only of secondary significance.

begraben, bringt der Frühling ans Licht,"¹ thus clearly referring to the fact that the flowers have sprung from Trymm's grave, indicating that he has been foully murdered (a frequent motif in Volksmärchen). Obviously she is, in a realistic sense, holding Wolf to ransom, and yet, in another symbolic sense, these flowers are to obstruct the evil powers which have dictated Wolf's behaviour and are a protection for Maria against further danger.

It is Elisabeth's incantatory use of the crucifix, coupled with her selfless love, which halts Willbrand initially and banishes the daemonic drive from him:

"Halt ein!" rief sie mit starker Stimme, ihm das
Krucifix entgegen streckend, "halt ein, im Namen
des Gekreuzigten, im Namen deines Heilands, halt
ein! . . . Weiche von ihm, verfluchte Macht der
Hölle! dein Sieger ist über dich kommen! in seinem
Namen verfluch' ich dich! . . ."²

The incantation is used here more for dramatic effect than out of necessity, although it is a little difficult to imagine the raving Willbrand being prevented from committing murder merely by the sight of the cross.

Another cockerel dispels the "wilde Jagd" in Das Gastmahl; the realistic Anna enters the room chanting:

"Wohl aufgeschaut!
Der Morgen graut;
Der Tanz hat nun ein Ende!"

. . . und der grosse Haushahn, . . . fing aus
Leibeskräften an zu krähen. Da ward es . . .
ganz still in dem Zimmer, . . . Und der Hahn
krähte zum zweitenmal. Da flogen die Eulen und
Uhus schnell zum Fenster hinaus; die unsichtbare
wilde Jagd folgte ihnen mit entsetzlichem Getöse;

¹Schriften, V, p. 30.

²Schriften, V, pp. 190-191.

. . . Und zum drittenmal krächte der Hahn. Da war auf einmal alles wie weggeblasen und weggestoben.¹

Another grave-flower, this time an alpine-rose plucked by Raimund from his mother's tomb ("Er sah es als einen Abschiedsgruss an, den die geliebte Mutter ihm herauf gesendet, . . ."),² is used in Das Schwert und die Schlangen. Marked parallels can be drawn between its function here and that of Caroline's three flowers in the first Märchen.³ When Raimund and Bolko meet the "wilde Jagd" and save Thorhilda from the Waldkönigin, it is the alpine-rose which in turn saves all three of them:

. . . er fasste schnell nach der Alpenrose . . . , und zog sie hervor, und in dem Augenblicke war es, als ob ein Sturmwind unter den Haufen führe, der ihn umgab. Mit entsetzlichem Geheul und Geschrei stäubte er auseinander, . . .⁴

Later, when Raimund angers the giant by disturbing his sleep, the flower is his only hope:

. . . da war ihm plötzlich als hörte er die Stimme seiner Mutter, die ihm Muth einsprach, und schnell riss er die Alpenrose von ihrem Grabe, aus der Schärpe; Muth und Leben kam in seine Brust zurück, er . . . berührte die Gestalt mit seiner Rose, und im Augenblick war sie versunken und verschwunden; . . .⁵

Once again, like Caroline's flowers, the alpine-rose emits a strange glow which lights Raimund's path through the desolate underworld and out again into daylight.

¹Schriften, V, p. 245.

²Schriften, V, p. 260.

³It also has redemptive powers: see below, pp. 78-79.

⁴Schriften, V, p. 276.

⁵Schriften, V, pp. 292-293.

The other symbol Raimund uses is the sword shaped like a cross with another golden cross inlaid on its blade. With it he kills the two giant snakes, which are the symbolic expression of King Giselherr's evil will to power and his consequent guilt.

Contessa uses all the exorcistic symbols in his tales to juxtapose most effectively good and evil; they are a device which enables him to bring about economically a confrontation between the daemonic and divine life-principles. That is to say, he can compress into these symbols the whole panoply of dualisms in the polarized view of life with which he presents us, since the daemonic figures ousted are themselves counter-active symbols.¹ When Rübezahl tempts Caroline, Christ is once again in the wilderness with Satan. When Haushahn crows, Christ is risen. Such is the didacticism of Contessa.

2. Man between Two Women

Often a male character is caught between two colliding poles, each symbolized by a female figure.² The tension between these diametrically opposed principles is generally expressed in the man's increasingly disturbed inner state and behaviour. He will be drawn magnetically towards one pole, usually the negative. If this is the case, the daemonic drive generally claims him, until he can be "redeemed" by the stronger

¹When, in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel, a magic ring is used to release Kammerrat Aber from his acquisitive tendency, there is no symbolic confrontation of the kind under discussion. The ring given Elisabeth (in Der schwarze See) by the "Fremder Jäger" has the reverse effect of ensnaring her in the diabolical will of the nixie.

²In Der Instinkt Eduard's astonishment and confusion when confronted unexpectedly with the twin-sister of the girl with whom he is in love involves no juxtaposition; he is really only a man between two images of one woman.

force of the opposite pole. If the converse pattern is found (as in the "Fremder Jäger's" love for Elisabeth), then logically the man will eventually succumb to diabolical powers. Just like the symbols of exorcism, these women contain by implication the entire gamut of Contessa's dualistic philosophy. Hence they too are economical symbols, economical in the sense that they are a consequence of poetic compression.¹

Meister Dietrich, as ever, provides the prototype situation for this course of events. Dietrich is stretched on an emotional rack between the evil Countess and the pure Kunigunde; this instrument of torture is operated skilfully by the "man in green." Contessa depicts Dietrich's agonized, relentless drift towards the negative pole of his existence in symbolic words, actually in symbols of symbols:

Wie eine Pflanze, die an einem sparsam erhellten
Orte steht, mit allen Kräften ihres Lebens nach
der Seite strebt, von wannen das Licht hereinbricht,
so waren auch seine Gedanken und alle Triebe seiner
Seele nur nach ihr [the Countess] gewendet. . . .
Sein bethörtes Herz zog ihn am andern Morgen wieder
zur schönen Gräfin, und Kunigundens Bild in seiner
Brust verblasste und verging vor dem Strahl ihrer
Augen, wie der Mond am frühen Morgen, wenn sich die
Sonne zeigt.²

The Professor in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel is drawn magnetically towards Nachtigall, who embodies the goal of his Romantic yearning: to possess her involves madness and death. Only the powerful intervention of Caroline (who is the antithesis of Nachtigall) saves him from disaster. Finally, through the apotheosis of the "schöne Sängerin," he achieves permanent distance from her; he is no longer caught between the two women, since

¹Viz. ". . . die Weiber sind es in diesem Leben, die uns hinauf oder hinunter ziehen." Schriften, III, p. 154.

²Schriften, III, pp. 149, 154.

Nachtigall has become the aesthetic symbol of Romantic idealism, devoid of sexuality:

Und da . . . , sahen sie . . . , die Jungfrau stehen, „anstatt der Harfe eine hohe Lilie in der Hand. Über ihrem Haupte kreiste der Paradiesvogel, im Sonnenglanz die wunderbare Pracht seines Gefieders entfaltend. Freudig streckte der Professor die Arme ihr entgegen. Jedes irdische Begehrt aber nach der herrlichen Gestalt war aus seiner Brust gewichen; in reiner Begeisterung loderte sein Herz zu ihr empor, . . .¹

The predicament of Georg Vollrad, ensnared between Therese (a comparative stranger for whom he feels a platonic, filial love) and Klara (his beautiful adopted sister for whom he nurtures a quasi-incestuous sexual passion), is an internal one:

Georg erblickte zwei weibliche Gestalten; die eine auf der Grenze zwischen Kind und Jungfrau, . . . die andere hoch und schlank . . . , in der Fülle vollendeter Schönheit und bei der Verwirrung, in welcher er sich befand, stand er zweifelhaft, an welche er sich wenden sollte.²

Both Therese and Klara are in fact equally innocent creatures. Though incapable of controlling his desire for Klara, Georg actually recognizes his problem to be purely within him and not in any way influenced deliberately from without, when he tells Klara: "die Hölle ist in meiner Brust."³ Klara represents the evil principle in his life without actually being evil; Georg contains the polarities within himself. Once saved by the devoted love of the Catholic Therese, he returns to sanity, accepting the poles of his existence in a symbolic act:

¹Schriften, IV, p. 321.

²Schriften, V, p. 84.

³Schriften, V, p. 111.

Auf einmal streckte er seine Hand nach Klaren aus Mit hervorbrechenden Freudenthränen ergriff sie die dargebotene Hand und drückte sie an ihre Brust. Darauf wendete sich Georg gegen Theresen und bot ihr gleichfalls lächelnd die Hand.¹

And, as Georg and Therese die, all three are again holding hands. Of course, although he is now attuned to his sinful nature, the identification between George and the devout Therese (the divine pole) is so close as to be almost organic:

. . . wie ihre [Theresens] Hand immer kälter und kälter ward, wurde auch Georgs Angesicht immer bleicher, . . .²

In Der schwarze See both Willbrand and the "Fremder Jäger" are caught between a divine and a daemonic love: the former between the bonds of familial love and his mesmerization by the nixie, the latter between the innocent Elisabeth and the same evil spirit.

In Das Schwert und die Schlangen Raimund, riding through the forest with his squire Bolko, saves the maiden Thorhilda from the "wilde Jagd." Immediately he is confronted by the beautiful, but menacing apparition of the Waldkönigin and must choose swiftly between the divine and the daemonic, for he is drawn initially, as are all but one of Contessa's heroes in such a predicament, towards the negative pole:

. . . als er ihr, die sprach, ins Gesicht schaute, vermochte er seine Augen nicht mehr abzuwenden,
. . . halb bewusstlos wie er war, kam es ihm vor, als ob die Blicke, die die schöne Jägerin aus ihren dunkeln Augen auf ihn schoss, ihn mit einem

¹Schriften, V, pp. 126-127.

²Schriften, V, p. 153.

feurigen Netz umwebten und umstrickten, und ihn mit Gewalt hinüberzögen zu ihr.¹

And then, like Dietrich, he is stretched taut by the centrifugal forces on each side of him:

Da drängte sich die Jungfrau [Thorhilda] ihm zur Seite hart an ihn und ergriff ängstlich seine Hand, ihn mit sich fortzuziehen. . . . als er in das bleiche und doch so schöne Gesicht sah [die Waldkönigin], . . . da fühlte er sich plötzlich im Innersten verwandelt; . . .²

Contessa's didactic intent in confronting his heroes with the anti-thetical external manifestations of both their naive and sinful natures is clear. Good always triumphs over evil; the new Eve crushes the serpent beneath her heel.

B. Woman between Two Men

More central to the problem facing the women between two men in Contessa's tales than the conflict between divine and daemonic forces is the ethic of loyalty. The women oscillate far less noticeably than the male characters between the poles of their existence; they tend to remain static, almost statuesque observers of the conflicts raging within others. They are detached spectators of the relentless struggle for the men's souls, well aware of the intrinsic polarities, intervening only when absolutely necessary and then always positively. When they actually find themselves between two poles, it is only to test their constancy; one never, except in a single case, fears for their souls.

Caroline is the exception. Not when she flirts harmlessly with

¹Schriften, V, p. 275. The "Fremder Jäger" is of course the exception to this rule of magnetic attraction to the negative pole.

²Schriften, V, pp. 275-276.

Kammerrat Aber, ignoring her preoccupied husband for a while, but when she is tempted by Dr Schachtheimer (Rübezahl):

. . . Caroline sah hinunter und erblickte ihren Mann, . . . "Du siehst, er hat dich bald vergessen!" rief der Doctor. "Sprich nur ein Wort; und er verschwindet für immer in jenem Abgrund, und du bist frei und Königin dieser Reiche."¹

Capitulation to Rübezahl at this juncture would not only destroy her own soul, but would prevent her from intervening in her husband's headlong precipitation towards madness and death. Her Christian faithfulness is on trial as much as her loyalty to her husband.

It is perhaps arguable that Elisabeth, caught between loyalty to Leuthold and the rapacious intentions of the "Fremder Jäger," is in equal danger, since the Jäger is a Rübezahl-figure. But it must be remembered that it is her father, not Leuthold, who is threatened by his daemonic nature: her surrender to the Jäger might well be rectified by the later intervention of the stable Leuthold. And even when emotionally confused after the Jäger's advances, she cannot banish Leuthold from her mind:

Noch immer stand im rothen Abendscheine die hohe Gestalt vor ihr, . . . und zu gleicher Zeit sah sie Leuthold's Bild in der Ferne, . . .²

A parallel situation is found in Muhme Tinel's legend of the white rose: the maiden Wlasta is caught between Rübezahl's power and her loyalty to the young knight she loves.³

Maria in Der Todesengel faces a straightforward dichotomous problem when forced to choose between two suitors (Wolf and Walther). But, by

¹Schriften, IV, p. 306.

²Schriften, V, p. 183.

³See Schriften, VIII, pp. 61-64.

her acceptance of Wolf, she experiences, as do the three remaining heroines, a conflict which involves a father-figure. Whereas in her case the problem is cancelled by Wolf's murder of the intransigent Trymm and Elisabeth's by the Junker's death (Die weisse Rose), both Klara and Mathilde must resolve their crises within. It is at this point that certain deficiencies in Contessa's literary ability become apparent: with neither Klara nor Mathilde are we witness to any inner dialectical process. They are essentially statuesque figures, not three-dimensional, developmental characters. Klara simply rebuffs Georg consistently after her initial confusion ("Auch sie breitete die Arme gegen ihn; doch plötzlich blieb sie stehen, schlug die Augen nieder, . . .").¹ No attempt is made by Contessa to investigate her psychological development in the way he does Georg's. The reader is left to guess at the state of Klara's emotions from her outward behaviour, and since she, unlike Therese, is almost phlegmatic in her female passivity, this is a fruitless task. Mathilde too, in Das Bild der Mutter, is in the same sense an ill-defined character. No more perceptive an indication of her struggle to reconcile her love for Fernando with her impending marriage to the Marchese is given than: "Georg glaubte zu bemerken, dass Mathilde erbleichte und zitterte; . . ."²

C. Apotheosis and Adoration

1. The Redemptive Apotheosis

Meister Dietrich contains the original example of the canonized female

¹Schriften, V, p. 84.

²Schriften, VI, p. 213.

who redeems a male character, a feature of many subsequent narratives.¹ Like Kunigunde, Maria in Der Todesengel is also apotheosized when instrumental in Wolf's redemption: previously Wolf has himself become aware that her love has redemptive value for him (" . . . er fühlte, dass nur ihre Hand ihn wieder auf den Weg zu Gott leiten könne, . . .")² and he associates this redemption with life after death ("Ich hoffe zu Gottes Barmherzigkeit, dass ich sie jenseits wiedersehen werde und bald, das weiss ich gewiss.").³ Thus when Maria moves to join him in death at his execution, she is apotheosized:

Ihr Auge leuchtete mit ungewohntem Glanze; auf
ihrem Gesicht ruhte stille Verklärung. . . . Da
setzte Maria den Blumenkranz auf ihr Haupt, stand
auf, nahm das kleine silberne Crucifix. . . .⁴

When, in the central scene of Vergib uns unsre Schuld, Georg declares his love, then grovels for pity and consolation and finally begs the apotheosized Klara to redeem him, the formula he uses bears striking resemblance to the three-fold confession of unworthiness and request for redemption in the Mass:⁵ "'Sprich nur ein Wort, . . . ein Wort nur. Lass

¹In this section on apotheosis the term "redemptive" is used in its broadest sense. Cf. the section in Chapter II above on "Redemption," p. 58.

²Schriften, V, p. 67.

³Schriften, V, p. 68.

⁴Schriften, V, pp. 74-75. At Maria's death the child Rudolf is also seen in apotheosis: ". . . im letzten Augenblick erschien das Bild ihres Kindes, um als ein leitender Engel sie hinüber zu führen in die Wohnung des Friedens." Loc. cit.

⁵Viz. "Domine, non sum dignus . . . ," which ends (in Schott's translation): ". . . sprich nur ein Wort, so wird meine Seele gesund." Cf. Matt. viii.8.

mich nicht so gehen. Die Hölle ist in meiner Brust."¹ Georg knows that he has schizophrenic tendencies; having placed Klara upon a pedestal far above him, he views her as the saint who will intercede for him, the God who will accept him and cancel his alienation. Since she shall purify him, she is to release him from the burden of his sinful nature: she becomes his religion, even, as the goal of his aspirations, his heaven. And to achieve the heaven of her, he is willing to go to hell. Thus, although the dominant principle in the darker side of Georg's inner life, Klara apotheosized is a kind of heaven-hell synthesis. If, in order to externalize the hell within him, Georg is prepared to accept the hell of Satan, then Klara is both an angel and a demon . . . but only to Georg. She for her part rejects him perfunctorily as insane. It is the implied apotheosis of Therese which actually redeems Georg: she is for him an intercessory saint in the orthodox sense: "'Bete Du für mich, unschuldiges Kind! Gott erhört nicht, was ich zu ihm bete."² It is the same Therese who prevents him from murdering his father and who thanks the Mother of God and St Clare for choosing her to save Georg from the clutches of Satan. It is Therese who later becomes the guardian angel of the Vollrad family, leading them through murderous hordes of hostile troops with her sword held aloft and her cry of "Jesus Maria!" And she, together with Georg, dies a martyr's death.

The apotheosis of Raimund's mother in Das Schwert und die Schlangen is subtler and purely symbolic. The alpine-rose plucked from her grave which has marvellous exorcistic properties begins to bleed as he is about to battle unknowingly with his father, thus redeeming both men from

¹Schriften, V, p. 111.

²Schriften, V, p. 112.

terrible disaster. An exact parallel occurs in the last instance of redemptive apotheosis (in Das Bild der Mutter) when the image of Fernando's mother, bathed in the evening sunlight, saves him also from a duel with his father.

2. The Idealistic Apotheosis

Contessa's heroes like to worship their women from afar.¹ In his stories this convention is frequently associated with the concept of aesthetic distance.² Meister Dietrich is ruined both as a man and as an artist, precisely because he fails to sustain the "utmost decrease of distance without its disappearance"³ essential to his aesthetic appreciation and creativity, which he as an artist should be competent to ensure:

[The Artist] . . . will prove artistically most effective in the formulation of an intensely personal experience, but he can formulate it artistically only on condition of a detachment from the experience qua personal. . . . since loss of distance . . . means loss of aesthetic appreciation.⁴

Frequently Contessa aids his heroes by veiling his female characters or by placing them upon a stage. Each of these deliberate apotheoses brought about wilfully by the spectator, transcending basic instincts in an ideal love, is qualitatively different from the redemptive apotheosis examined

¹Even occasionally when their daemonic passion demands that distance be destroyed.

²There is an (albeit tenuous) connection between ideal love conceived out of distance and ideal love shared in total isolation. The latter is found in Der Todesengel (Maria's bedroom), Vergib uns unsre Schuld (Georg's bedroom), Der schwarze See (Leuthold and Elisabeth marooned on an island) and Das Bild der Mutter (Countess Roseneck with her two daughters).

³Edward Bullough, "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," Aesthetics: Lectures and Essays, ed. E.M. Wilkinson (London, 1957), p. 100. Subsequently referred to as Bullough.

⁴Bullough, pp. 99, 100.

earlier.

Meister Dietrich's downfall is in fact initiated precisely at the moment when the Countess removes her concealing hat; from this point onwards a monstrous daemonic urge draws him to her:

Sie trug, nach Landessitte, eine sammetne Kappe,
so dass er ihr Gesicht nicht sehen konnte, doch
däucht' ihm, niemals edleren Wuchs, noch schönere
Gestalt erblickt zu haben, . . . Sie . . . schlug
die Sammetkappe zurück¹

No sooner has the Countess left the church than Dietrich, previously revealed in his conversation with the "man in green" to be a happily married man, content with his occupation as an artist, is compelled to follow her and discover her identity and where she lives. This unveiling is Contessa's way of indicating the loss of aesthetic appreciation and the acquirement of sexual desire; it is a symbolic act which represents for the beholder a wishful anticipation of the fulfilment of his own voluptuous desires. Manon, Countess Rovero, Nachtigall and Natalie in Das Bild der Mutter all appear veiled and, when they do, the inherent distancing has the same recurrent effect on all the male spectators as it does upon Georg Haberland the artist:

Er warf einen Blick auf Natalien. Seine Augen
begegneten den ihrigen, und sie senkte sie erröthend
zur Erde. Sie trug den Schleier, den sie bei ihrem
ersten Zusammentreffen getragen. Noch nie meinte
er sie schöner gesehen zu haben.²

But how different is the effect upon Georg when he sees Natalie without her veil for the first time. His consciousness of her physical beauty is not that of the remote observer--here he reacts physically:

¹Schriften, III, pp. 137-138.

²Schriften, VI, p. 259.

. . . sie hatte den Schleier zurückgeschlagen. .
 . . Ein Blick aus den dunkeln Augen [diese siegenden
 Strahlen, die so bescheiden sich in die langen,
 schwarzen Wimpern hüllten] begegnete dem seinigen,
 und sein Herz bebte.¹

Having endowed the act of removing a veil with erotic significance, Contessa, if he is to avoid indelicacy, is obliged to have Georg's mother veiled when she appears in his dreams: "Gleich darauf sah er sich in einem finstern Walde, eine verschleierte Frau von edler Gestalt eilte auf ihn zu."² And later this veiling is seen clearly as an idealistic apotheosis:

. . . vor ihm stand die schöne Frau mit dem Schleier,
 . . . Ein sanfter Schimmer schien von der edlen
 Gestalt auszugehen, ihr Antlitz strahlte von seliger
 Verklärung. . . . Ergriffen . . . sank er zu ihren
 Füßen nieder, schaute dann zu ihr empor und konnte
 sich nicht satt sehen an der unendlichen Liebe und
 Güte dieses holden Angesichts . . .³

The theatre is used as a distancing device in two of the tales. In Der Instinkt, Eduard sees an ideal apotheosis of Angelika-Mariane when she plays Maria Stuart ("Wie eine Gottheit stand sie vor ihm im Glanze der Verklärung, . . .")⁴ and in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel the effect of Nachtigall's performance on the Professor, though less explicit, is similar ("eine hohe verschleierte Gestalt erschien, die Harfe im Arm. . . ,"
 etc.).⁵

¹Schriften, VI, p. 183.

²Schriften, VI, p. 201.

³Schriften, VI, p. 205.

⁴Schriften, II, p. 23.

⁵Schriften, IV, pp. 288-289.

All the other instances of apotheosis are relatively straightforward idealizations of the desired female, best examined in parallel quotations:

. . . eine herrliche Jungfrau, . . . stand nun hoch und schlank, von einem lichtblauen Mantel in reichen Falten umschlossen, . . . in heller Beleuchtung des Feuers, auf dem nächtlichen Hintergrunde gleich einer himmlischen Erscheinung da [Nachtigall in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel].¹

Ihm . . . war Maria vom ersten Augenblick an als ein wundervolles Heiligenbild erschienen, dem in stiller Andacht und frommer Ehrfurcht zu dienen, sein Leben bestimmt sey, das ihm nun erst zum wahren Leben aufgegangen dünkte [Maria in Der Todesengel].²

"In meinem Vaterlande ist ein Bild der heiligen Jungfrau, auf welchem sie von Blumen rings umgeben dargestellt ist, einen Lilienstengel in der Hand. Als Knabe habe ich oft zu ihm gebetet. Ich sah euch unter den Blumen sitzen, und" [idem].³

. . . seinen Augen nur war die ganze Fülle ihrer Anmuth unverborgen, in seinem Busen nur lebte ein würdiges Bild von ihr, und ihm allein wäre es zugekommen, ihr Lob auszusprechen, wenn seine Lippen es gewagt hätten; Vollrads Worte dünkten ihm nur Entheiligung . . . [Klara in Vergib uns unsre Schuld].⁴

". . . und als ich in die Höhe schaute, sah ich Euer Bild mitten in den grauen Nebeln, die aus dem See stiegen, . . . wie mein schützender Engel" [Elisabeth in Der schwarze See].⁵

¹Schriften, IV, p. 265. Cf. Schriften, IV, pp. 306-307, 309-310, 321-322 for further examples.

²Schriften, V, pp. 9-10.

³Schriften, V, p. 35.

⁴Schriften, V, p. 89. Cf. Schriften, V, pp. 90, 115.

⁵Schriften, V, p. 178.

"... dies ist der Friedensengel, der allen Streit schlichten wird in dieser Brust und mich sanft geleiten bis an die Pforte seiner Heimath!" [Mathilde in Das Bild der Mutter].¹

D. Female Supremacy

The words of the "man in green" to Meister Dietrich, "... die Weiber sind es in diesem Leben, die uns hinauf oder hinunter ziehen,"² are fast becoming a recurrent feature, a leitmotif in this study of recurrence. But they are as undeniably central to Contessa's view of human conflicts and reconciliation as they are deeply serious in intent.³ Ostensibly Contessa's women are not in any sense emancipated, with the possible exceptions of Countess Rovero and Frau Mathildis; some (e.g. Kunigunde, Maria, Gertrud et al.) are meekly subservient. But the fact that women are generally the dominant principle behind all the daemonic drives of the heroes and are equally instrumental in their redemption reveals a more subtle, even insidious sovereignty over the male. For Contessa's men the poles of existence, between which they oscillate more or less rhythmically, are essentially female. The origin of this view is Judao-Christian, in Contessa's case Catholic. Dr Schachtheimer's telling of the legend of the giant race whose tombs are in fact the Riesengebirge contains, besides the idea of the Sintflut, clear allusions to the concept of original sin, to the temptation of Adam by Eve, to woman's destruction

¹Schriften, VI, 213.

²Schriften, III, p. 154.

³Undoubtedly Contessa's unhappy second marriage to Henriette Nauendorf accounts largely for the misogynistical tone of Master Rösslein and for recurrent emphasis upon marriages saved only by love of or for the children. See Chapter I above, pp. 17-18.

of man's pre-existential naivety and the banishment from Eden:¹

Wie nun aber auf dieser Welt, als welcher selbst
keine Ewigkeit zugemessen ward, Alles des Wechsels
Unterthan und Leibeigner ist, so konnte auch dieser
glückselige Zustand nicht immerdar bestehen. Und
den allerersten Anstoss zur Veränderung sollen die
Weiber gegeben haben, in welche durch den Willen
des Herrn, so zu sagen, der Sauerteig des
Menschengeschlechts gelegt zu seyn scheint, der das
Gute gleichwie das Böse in selbigem erst zur Gährung,
Entwicklung und vollkommenen Gestaltung bringt.²

Sinlessness is the only state in which the polarities of existence can be synthesized--a synthesis which woman originally broke down--and it is this pre-existential naivety which is partially the goal of the Professor's Romantic Sehnsucht. The symbol of this synthetic state is the Karfunkelring, buried deep in the Riesengebirge, in which is preserved "das wahre Geheimniss der Welt, der Zaum und Zügel der widereinander streitenden Erd- und Himmelskräfte."³ Hence, whilst woman initiated the dichotomies of existence, at the same time her act was the precondition for Romantic yearning such as the Professor's. It is therefore to Caroline ("der Sauerteig") that Nachtigall says significantly: "Bewahre deinen Ring, du hast ihn dir erworben!"⁴ Such is the subtle, yet massive

¹The giants are seen (in accordance with ancient legend) to be a naive, pre-existential race: "Auch regierte kein Streit zwischen dem göttlichen Gesetz, . . . und dem irdischen Verlangen . . . und sie lebten darum auch untereinander in Frieden und kindlicher Eintracht." Schriften, IV, p. 232. My use of the term "pre-existential" combines both the customary sense in English of "the existence of the soul before the generation of the body"--Adam and Eve's sudden physical awareness of one another after their first sin can be interpreted as symbolic of the generation of the body--and also Hofmannsthal's concept of Präexistenz: the unproblematic, guiltless, magical state of harmonious irresponsibility which precedes adult Existenz.

²Schriften, IV, pp. 232-233. My italics.

³Schriften, IV, p. 238.

⁴Schriften, IV, p. 321.

supremacy of Contessa's women: they contain within the quality of their existence all life's centrifugal forces. They released initially the negative energy which destroyed man's innocence:

"Sieh da, . . . das sind die Überreste eines ganzen untergegangenen, bessern Menschengeschlechts, das dort unten moderte; Staub! Staub alle Sehnsucht, Liebe und Hoffnung dieser tausend und abertausend nun zerfallenen Herzen, und ihr stolzes Jenseits schlang die Erde in ihren finstern Schooss!"¹

Yet they too control positive resources of energy, as can be seen from the frequent instances of redemptive apotheosis in Contessa's tales.² Woman is at once Eve and Mary, devil and angel, Paradise lost and Paradise regained.

In the face of such awesome power, man has had to develop various defensive strategies for his own protection. The most popular is humorous derision of the female, such as that by Eduard's uncle in Der Instinkt:

. . . wer den Weibern vertraut, baut Häuser aus Märzsnee; wer den Weibern vertraut, will auf einem Regenbogen in den Himmel steigen, oder Gold destilliren aus der Abendröthe; wer den Weibern vertraut, sucht die Weisheit im Narrenhause; oder kurz, der Weise, welcher den Weibern vertraut, gehört selbst ins Narrenhaus, . . .³

Yet man has developed superstitions too, the most obvious being the feminality of fate.⁴

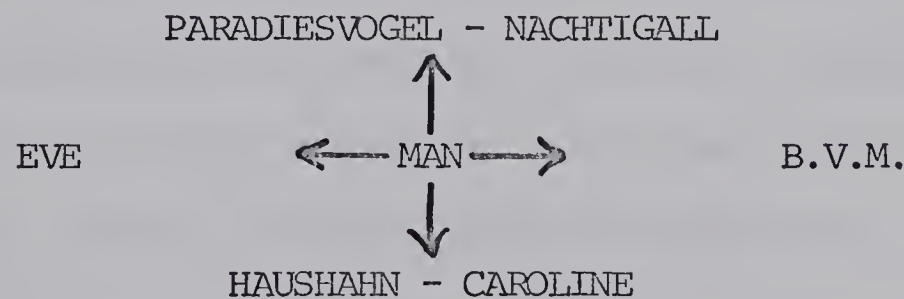
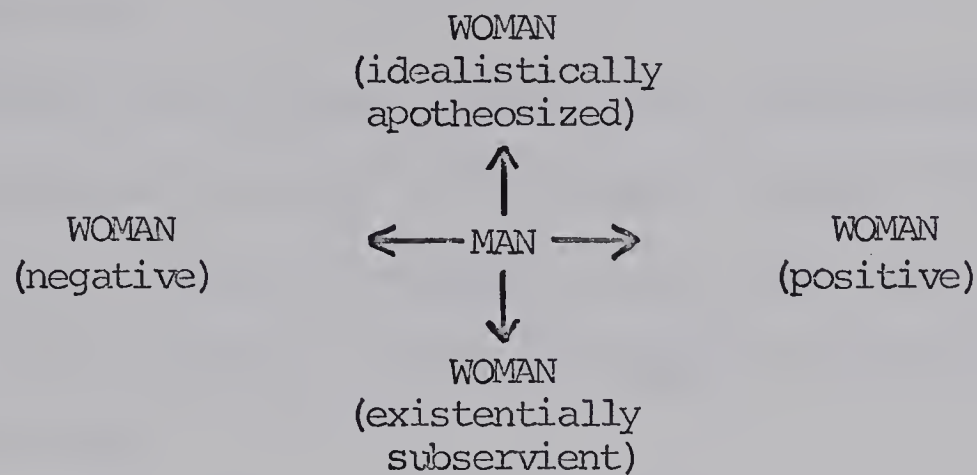
¹Schriften, IV, pp. 306-307. Schachtheimer (Rübezahl) to Caroline.

²See above, pp. 76-79.

³Schriften, II, p. 57.

⁴See the opening of Magister Rösslein: ". . . Fortuna, die . . . als ein Weib nur kecken Gesellen hold ist, . . ." Schriften, IV, p. 3.

It would be an oversimplification to suggest, on the evidence of Magister Rösslein, that Contessa was, if not an outright misogynist, then at least a misogynist. His view of womankind is in fact so deeply ambivalent that he sees the life of man as sustained by the tensions between two sets of polarities, one vertical, the other horizontal. This womb-like existence is best understood diagrammatically, first in essential, then in symbolic terms:



To lend the necessary third dimension to this principle, we must imagine that we are viewing these diagrams from above, God-like as it were, and that, as man is drawn magnetically to each pole in turn, in a gentle or violent oscillatory motion, so too he is spiralling up towards us.¹ When

¹Cf. my view of Steigerung and Polarität in Contessa's works, Chapter I above, pp. 19-22.

one discovers such sublime Goethean symmetry in Contessa's thought, it becomes impossible to understand how Hoffmannists like Walter Harich could have made the crass mistake of dismissing him as "einen blutleeren Abzweig der Romantik."¹ Contessa was neither anaemic nor straightforwardly Romantic; and if he is to be regarded as an offshoot of anything--which is not to do justice to his originality--then that would perhaps be the Baroque.²

E. Parent and Child

The recurrent theme of parental-filial love has been discussed circumstantially in previous sections of this thesis.³ There is no need to amplify those points about the efficacy of such love here; this section simply probes into Contessa's view of the nature of the bond between the parent and the child.

It has already been shown that parental and filial love may halt the daemonic drive and avert disaster,⁴ that parents' love for their children may prevent the dissolution of a marriage⁵ and that a strong redemptive power is ascribed by Contessa to familial love of any kind.⁶ But he goes further than this. Indeed, he views the bond between mother and child

¹Walter Harich, E.T.A. Hoffmann. Das Leben eines Künstlers (Berlin, 1920), II, p. 32.

²Cf. Chapter II above, pp. 60-61.

³See above, pp. 26-27, 56-57, 61-63, 77-79, 81.

⁴As in Das Schwert und die Schlangen and Das Bild der Mutter. See above, pp. 78-79.

⁵As in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel. See above, pp. 26-27, 62-63.

⁶As in Der Todesengel and Das Bild der Mutter. See above, pp. 59 ff., 79.

to be as organic after birth as before, yet at the same time metaphysical, even telepathic:

Das Leben des Kindes war durch tausend Adern mit
ihrem Herzen verwachsen, und wenn jenes sich losriss,
musste dieses verbluten. . . .¹

Such organic imagery provides paradoxically Contessa's explanation for the essentially non-organic, psychosomatic death of Maria. And yet there is a pattern to the shared death-wishes of Rudolf and Maria which suggests an instinctual, telepathic transfer of desires from mother to son and then a conscious feed-back from son to mother. The movement could be described in terms of thesis (Maria's desire for union with Rudolf after death), antithesis (Rudolf's death-wish) and synthesis (their concurrence, their instinctual emotional unity).² Later it is indeed the apotheosized Rudolf who ultimately leads Maria heavenwards.

So strong is her maternal instinct that Caroline quells her very real fear of entering the Riesengebirge, defying the colossal supernatural strength of Rübezahl to win back her lost son; she is warned by the Kobold Jonathan:

. . . wer das Reich des goldnen Tages verlasse,
der verfalle den unterirdischen Mächten, die
keines Menschen Freunde seyen. Carolines Entschluss
aber stand zu fest, als dass diese Warnung, mit so
ungewöhnlichem Ernste sie auch ausgesprochen wurde,
ihn hätte erschüttern können.³

¹Schriften, V, p. 50.

²See Schriften, V, pp. 33 (thesis), 50-51 (antithesis) and 52-53 (synthesis).

³Schriften, IV, p. 291.

Contessa sees the parental bond not only as having redemptive powers and invincible strength, but also as something beautiful¹ and as something necessary. Georg Haberland, with his ability (denied to Meister Dietrich) to balance his aesthetic consciousness on the knife-edge of what Bullough calls the "antimony of distance,"² is able to appreciate the beauty of parental love in his foster-mother, at once involved and yet remote:

. . . er [Georg] kniete innig bewegt vor ihr [his foster-mother] nieder und drückte ihre Hand bald an seine Lippen, bald an seine Brust. . . . und nun eilten beide [Natalie and Mathilde, Georg's sisters by adoption] zu ihrer Mutter, und knieten zu ihren Füßen nieder, und die Mutter mit Blicken voll unendlicher Liebe und tiefer Rührung legte ihre Hände auf das Haupt der blühenden Töchter und liebkosete ihnen; Georg aber stand in dem Anschauen der reizenden Gruppe verloren.³

Georg demonstrates this disciplined balancing of distance again when he describes with passion and yet impassively⁴ the love of his adopted father Lorenz Haberland for him and the old man's need for such love:

Sein Herz fühlte das Bedürfniss, irgend etwas sein zu nennen und zu lieben auf der weiten Erde; es hing sich mit allen Kräften seines reichen Lebens an mich, den er seinen Sohn nannte, . . . ich war wirklich sein Kind, sein Sohn geworden, er wollte vergessen, wie er zu meinem Besitz gelangt war, . . . ja er konnte selbst den Gedanken nicht ertragen, nach seinem Tode nicht als mein Vater in meinem Andenken fortzuleben.⁵

¹As in the actual "Bild der Mutter" painted by Georg Haberland.

²Bullough, p. 98, et passim. "The utmost decrease of distance without its disappearance." See "Apotheosis and Adoration" above, pp. 79 ff.

³Schriften, VI, pp. 211, 214. My italics.

⁴Contessa deliberately intensifies Georg's description (Schriften, VI, p. 215) and emphasizes Georg's consciously skilful construction of the reminiscence to achieve the maximum effect upon his audience.

⁵Schriften, VI, pp. 216-217.

The essential qualities of parental-filial love are seen by Contessa to be both functional and aesthetic simultaneously; and in their functional aspect they are profoundly moral.

F. Incest

That Contessa, a didactic writer who as a rule sought assiduously to avoid even mildly salacious indelicacies, should have introduced the theme of incest into his narratives on no less than six occasions is perplexing. Even the thin veil of mistaken identity, transparent to the intelligent reader, could not entirely have vindicated him in his day from charges of audaciously bordering on the unseemly.

The love of Eduard's uncle in Der Instinkt for Angelika is quasi-incestuous: he is later revealed to be her father. Contessa's attempt after the revelation of identities to transform the uncle's sexual desire in an instant to paternal fondness is flippant in the extreme, since it ignores the fact that, earlier in the story, Eduard discovered his uncle apparently spying on Angelika in her negligée through a crack in her bedroom door:

Aber ein wunderbares Ding, Kinder, sagte der Oheim,
ist es doch um den Instinkt! Ich liebte doch die
Angelika gleich vom ersten Anblick an, und nun kommt
es heraus, dass dies lediglich die Stimme der Natur
war.¹

Herr Vollrad (Vergib uns unsre Schuld) is entangled similarly with Klara who, whilst not his true daughter, is his foster-child and should normally be the object of paternal tenderness rather than of fervent adoration.

¹Schriften, II, p. 67.

Most of the other cases of quasi-incest concern fraternal relationships. The couples Georg Vollrad and Klara, Leuthold and Elisabeth, Georg Haberland and Natalie each grow up together as brother and sister and each go through an emotional crisis when they become lovers.

In Haselmeyer's first melodrama, performed in the barn behind the inn "Zum Goldenen Bock,"¹ the love of the two brothers for their stepmother is clearly incestuous in quality, even if, as in all the tales except Der Instinkt, actual consanguinity is not involved:

Sie [Natalie, who is in the audience] sah die verbrecherische Liebe der beiden Brüder zu ihrer Stiefmutter in immer wilderer Glut . . . sich erheben, . . . und zwischen ihnen die unglückliche Hildegunde im Kampfe mit der eignen strafbaren Neigung.²

The close parallelism between the younger brother's subsequent behaviour and that of Georg Vollrad towards Klara³ is remarkable:

. . . bei ihrem Anblick rafft die rasende Leidenschaft sich von neuem empor: er umschlingt die Geliebte, sie ist sein, nichts wird sie ihm entreissen, er schaudert vor keinem Verbrechen mehr; den Himmel hat er aufgegeben, der Hölle will er dienen um solchen Preis; . . .⁴

G. Schizophrenia

Pankalla writes of Hoffmann's use of the Doppelgänger:

So wird bei Hoffmann der Doppelgänger zum Sinnbild der Zweipoligkeit des gesamten Lebens; zwei objektive Welten stehen sich gegenüber als

¹In Das Bild der Mutter. Cf. Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, II, 3.

²Schriften, VI, p. 186.

³See Schriften, V, pp. 111-112, 116-118. Also cf. the section in this chapter above on "The Redemptive Apotheosis," p. 78.

⁴Schriften, VI, p. 188. My italics.

die Welt der Sehnsucht nach dem Irrationalen und die Welt des Rationalen, der Gegensatz Phantasie und Wirklichkeit.¹

In many of Contessa's tales too, as might be surmised from what has been shown in this thesis as his basically dualistic interpretation of things in general, we find evidence of this same polarization of the inner life in external phenomena. But this again is an oversimplification: Contessa does not always externalize inner dichotomies (as can be seen from Die weisse Rose);² frequently he leaves the schizoid tendencies of his heroes in abstract form. Psychoneurotic Zerspaltung is usually found as a symptom of inner instability prior to the emergence of the daemonic drive. Many of the daemonic heroes experience this: Dietrich, the Professor, Georg Vollrad, Willbrand. Only a few characters (the Professor, Bolko and, in a sense, Magister Rösslein) actually encounter their doubles.³

¹Gerhard Pankalla, Karl Wilhelm Contessa und E.T.A. Hoffmann. Motiv- und Form-Beziehungen im Werk zweier Romantiker (Würzburg, 1938), p. 25. Pankalla, obviously more interested in Hoffmann than Contessa, is unenlightening on the question of the Doppelgänger in Contessa's works. His section entitled "Der Doppelgänger" mentions Contessa only briefly and fails utterly to examine the psychological significance of the double in Contessa's tales. This section of mine deals more with the recurrence of schizophrenic behaviour per se than with the literary significance of the double, which would be too interpretive a task for this study.

²See Chapter I above, pp. 42-43.

³Magister Rösslein's evocation of the Devil could be interpreted psychologically. The doubles in Der Instinkt and Die Schatzgräber, mentioned by Pankalla (loc. cit.), are neither relevant to our discussion nor particularly significant in any connection. Professor II and Bolko II represent the externalization of the irrational (evil) pole within each original character, as suggested by Bolko II's disappearance after the slaying of the snakes.

Meister Dietrich's emotional instability, although revealed in self-analysis, cannot be cured without external influence and redemptive catharsis: "was ihm heut' begegnet war, hatte sein Gemüth zerspalten; er gewährte dessen wohl, doch konnte oder wollte er sich die Ursach' nicht sagen."¹ Later, his desire to escape the reality of his awful predicament almost leads to the total externalization of his schizoid tendencies in a Doppelgänger, but not quite: "hin und wieder, auf und ab trieb er sich ohne Rast umher und wäre sich selber gern entflohen."²

The Professor first gives some indication of latent schizophrenia in his habit of talking to himself (" . . . Fantasien, Betrachtungen und Selbstgesprächen, die er gern mit einer lebhaften Gestikulation begleitete, . . .")³ and later, long after the appearance and disappearance of his Doppelgänger, the Professor experiences paranoic Angst in the face of his own loss of homogeneous identity and of his mental disintegration:

. . . er wollte rufen und doch wagte er es nicht, denn ihm war, als musste er, statt seiner Stimme, irgendeinen anderen grässlichen Laut vernehmen. . . . und durch seine Glieder schlich ein allmähliches dumpfes Erstarren.⁴

In Vergib uns unsre Schuld Georg Vollrad's dilemma⁵ contains the seeds of schizophrenia from the start:

. . . obwohl von heimlicher Sehnsucht ohn' Unterlass nach Klaren hingezogen, fühlte [Georg] sich doch in ihrer Nähe allzeit von einer seltsam beklemmenden

¹Schriften, III, p. 143.

²Schriften, III, p. 187.

³Schriften, IV, p. 251.

⁴Schriften, IV, p. 304. Cf. Willbrand's fear of his own words (Schriften, V, p. 165).

⁵See "Divine versus Daemonic" above, pp. 72-73.

Empfindung und einer ihm selbst unerklärbaren Scheu
 ergriffen und von ihr hinweggedrängt. . . . sich
 oft selbst ein Räthsel.¹

Georg soon finds himself alone in a limbo between his earlier, now abandoned familial relationships with Vollrad and Klara and his desired, but impossible new love-relationship with Klara. He is effectively isolated in a limbo between two identities, which means in one sense that his cohesive existence is momentarily suspended, in another simply that he is schizophrenic: ". . . da fing ihm an zu grauen vor seinen eignen Gedanken, die wie Gespenster in seiner Seele aufstiegen, und bald in wilder Verwirrung durch einander tobten."² Georg's inner instability, rather than externalized specifically in a Doppelgänger, is reflected in the turbulent events of the war raging around Magdeburg, in Georg's paradoxical view of Klara and in his paranoid behaviour at the shooting-range when he sees one of the targets to be Vollrad. The way Georg mixes erotica and devotion, sexual and quasi-religious ecstasy, involvement and distance is symptomatic of the schizophrenic psychoneurosis which governs his behaviour totally at the climactic point in the story when he is about to murder Vollrad. And, in a way, his symbolic act of joining hands with Therese and Klara on awakening from his coma represents not only his acceptance of the poles of his existence, but also the amalgamation of the hitherto non-cohesive elements of his personality into a harmonious whole.

¹Schriften, V, pp. 88-89.

²Schriften, V, p. 92. Willbrand in Der schwarze See is similarly isolated between Gertrud and the nixie.

H. Rübezahl.

Rübezahl, whose precise origin folk-lorists cannot agree upon,¹ is the powerful Berggeist indigenous to the Riesengebirge. Contessa introduces him into the tales on five, possibly six occasions.² Dr Schachtheimer in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel, the "Fremder Jäger" in Der schwarze See, Oberberg- und Hütteninspektor Bergmann in Das Gastmahl, Meister Ezzelino in Das Schwert und die Schlangen and the one-eyed stranger in Die Schatzgräber are all clearly Rübezahl-figures. In addition, the Berggeist Jonathan represents an attempt by Contessa to isolate the undignified, prankish behaviour of Rübezahl in one minor character, freeing him to concentrate all Rübezahl's dignity, power and menace in the major character of Dr Schachtheimer.

Contessa's Rübezahl-figures are identifiable only from the circumstances in which they appear, their features and their behaviour; Contessa always gives them pseudonyms. From Praetorius³ we know that Rübezahl is frequently seen as a Jägergestalt, the leader of the "wilde Jagd,"⁴ and in

¹Various hypotheses have been advanced: some scholars maintain that Rübezahl's origin is Slavonic, some that it is Germanic (Wodan), some even Greek (Poseidon).

²The parenthetical story of Rübezahl and Wlasta in Muhme Tinel's legend in Die weisse Rose has none of the recurrent features discussed here. See Schriften, VIII, pp. 61-64. See also "Woman between Two Men" above, p. 75.

³Johannes Praetorius, Bekannte und unbekannte Historien von Rübezahl (Leipzig, 1920); reprinted by the Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (Darmstadt, 1967). Of particular interest: "Rübezahl ist ein Jägermeister" (No. 1) and the tales (Nos. 55-58) in which Rübezahl endows deserving people with wealth. Rübezahl's connection with the "wilde Jagd" is explained by Henne-Am Rhyn who states: "Das Volk sagt ausdrücklich: 'der Nachtjäger ist der Rübezahl.'" See Otto Henne Am-Rhyn, Die deutsche Volkssage (Leipzig, 1879), p. 537.

⁴Hence, to a certain extent, a diabolical figure. Just prior to their disappearance, Bergmann and his friends in Das Gastmahl are identified as the "wilde Jagd." Schriften, V, p. 244.

Contessa's tales the figures in question usually wear the green Jägerrock or the Bergknappentracht.¹ In general, Contessa adheres to the ambivalence of the legends insofar as his Rübezahl-figures, whilst always sinister, are neither wholly evil nor wholly good; the legendary Rübezahl delights in playing tricks upon those who deserve no better, but is magnanimous towards those worthy of his generosity. And, just as there is disagreement among the storytellers and folk-lorists as to whether Rübezahl was a giant or a dwarf, so too Contessa depicts him usually as the latter, but in Die Schatzgräber (perhaps because the one-eyed stranger is really only a counterfeited parody of Rübezahl) as a "langer, hagerer Mann,"² There is actually a point in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel where Schachtheimer visibly increases his stature:

Caroline sah ihn mit Erstaunen an, denn seine ganze Gestalt wuchs höher bei diesen Worten, die Bergmannsmütze war verschwunden: ein Reif von blitzenden Steinen wand sich um seine Stirn; seine Augen funkelten.³

Dr Schachtheimer is the prototype of the Rübezahl-figures in Contessa's tales. The descriptions both of his appearance and of his behaviour are repeated in subsequent narratives with negligible variation. A comparison of the physical attributes of these figures reveals close parallels:

¹These are merely two of many semblances; in the legends Rübezahl appears also as a maiden, a youth, a monk and as all kinds of animals (e.g. toad, bear, ass, owl, cow, horse, satyr, cockerel, etc.). Moritz von Schwind's painting, "Rübezahl streift durch den Wald," depicts him as a giant. There is nothing legendary about Wolf's appearance as the "Schwarzer Jäger" in Der Todesengel.

²Schriften, VII, p. 208.

³Schriften, IV, p. 305. Jonathan also appears momentarily in gigantic form tossing the clouds around (Schriften, IV, p. 295) and Meister Ezzelino is seen as a gigantic rock-formation (Schriften, V, pp. 287-288.).

. . . die seltsame, kurze Figur auf ihren merklich ausgeschweiften, dünnen Beinen [trug] den ungeheuern Kopf . . . , mehrere kostbare Ringe [funkelten] an den kurzen dicken Fingern, . . . ein seltsames Feuer loderte . . . in seinen tiefliegenden Augen auf, . . . ein kleiner Mann in Bergknappentracht, das roth flackernde Grubenlicht und der Mütze, in der Hand einen schweren Fäustel tragend [Dr Schachtheimer in Haushahn und Paradiesvogel].¹

. . . ein gar seltsam triumphirendes Lächeln zuckte um seinen Mund, und aus den tiefliegenden Augen schoss es wie zwei dunkle Flammen. Der Ring brannte . . . am Finger, als wär er glühend . . . ["Fremder Jäger" in Der schwarze See].²

Das ganze Männlein war etwa drei Fuss hoch; die Hälfte dieser Höhe nahm beinah der ungeheure Kopf für sich hinweg, und schien . . . gar nicht zu den übrigen spärlichen Gliedmassen zu gehören.³ . . . Die Kleidung . . . bestand aus einem grauen Bergmannskittel. In der Hand führte er einen starken Spitzhammer. . . . Die grossen Augen funkelten . . . [Bergmann in Das Gastmahl].⁴

. . . so traten sie beide wieder herein mit einem kleinen Männlein. . . . da und dorten in den Gebirgen, um den geheimen Kräften der Natur auf die Spur zu gehn, die sich in Kräutern, Steinen und Metallen auf das wunderbarste an den Tag legen [Meister Ezzelino in Das Schwert und die Schlangen].⁵

. . . herein trat ein ziemlich langer, hagerer Mann in einem abgetragenen grünen Rocke, . . . das rothe struppige Haar . . . gab dem Kopfe eine unförmliche Breite. . . . [sein rechtes Auge] blitzte und funkelte mit einem ganz ungewöhnlichen Leben und Feuer aus seiner tiefen Höhle hervor [The one-eyed stranger in Die Schatzgräber].⁶

¹Schriften, IV, pp. 223, 227, 300.

²Schriften, V, p. 163.

³Probably an allusion to the fact that the legendary Rubezahl frequently appears headless.

⁴Schriften, V, pp. 216-217.

⁵Schriften, V, p. 251.

⁶Schriften, VII, pp. 208-209.

On their initial appearance three of the characters bring with them an elixir which they offer to the mortals, whom it intoxicates and excites. Schachtheimer has a crystal flask of Jamaica rum which remains constantly replenished however much is poured from it. The "Fremder Jäger" brings out a bottle of fiery Hungarian wine. Meister Ezzelino produces from his rucksack a bottle of his own special wine and five silver goblets; like Schachtheimer's flask, the tiny knapsack seems to contain an inexhaustable supply of liquor. The drinking on all three occasions accompanies the telling of a legend.

In three of these tales Rübzahl is connected in some way with the search for treasure; at the close of almost all, Rübzahl bestows wealth upon the protagonists. The Professor, Caroline and Aber discover the giants' horde (which they forswear). The "Fremder Jäger" gives Gertrud a sack of gold with which to redeem her husband's honour. The one-eyed stranger leads Wolfgang to the "treasure" which will be his daughter's dowry. Bergmann and his friends leave Arnold and Elsbeth a fortune in gold, silver and pearls. The legends of Rübzahl feature him in exactly this role of guide and benefactor.

Despite the ambivalence of the Rübzahl-figures in terms of good and evil, when Contessa does seek to place them clearly in his scheme of polarities, then he tends to identify them with the latter pole. For example, in Schachtheimer's attempt to seduce Caroline, because of her close identification with the Christian ethos (she is clutching her three flowers, symbolic of faith, hope and love, throughout), Schachtheimer seems totally indentifiable with the Devil. His three-fold strategy is highly reminiscent of Satan's temptation of Christ in the wilderness.

"Alle Schätze dieses unterirdischen Reichs
liegen zu deinen Füßen! . . . Wirf diese Blumen
weg, . . . und reiche mir die Hand, so sind sie
dein."¹

The further temptations are that Caroline could become Queen of the Underworld and regain her lost child, if only she will discard her three flowers and her husband (i.e. the Christian faith and Christian marriage).

Contessa's Rübezahl-figures, whilst perhaps somewhat repetitive in conception, are original inasmuch as they incorporate many of the disparate elements of the folk-legends. As characters they are boldly drawn; although obviously lacking the consistency of motivation and symmetrical development of mortals, they stand out sharply as some of the more memorable characters Contessa created.

¹Schriften, IV, pp. 305-306. Cf. Luke iv.5-7.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The first chapter of this thesis provides any reader new to the works of Wilhelm Contessa with the basic knowledge of the man and his works necessary for an understanding of the classifications and interpretations undertaken in subsequent chapters. It probably represents the first attempt ever made in English to summarize in a consistent and methodical way the course of Contessa's life, interspersed with brief commentary on his narrative works. Full bibliographical references to the narratives only--not to the plays--are given in the appropriate footnotes. These footnotes constitute the most comprehensive collection of bibliographical data ever assembled in connection with Contessa's narratives.

The two central chapters probe deeper into the narrative works, in order to carry out essential, long overdue exercises in orientation by means of classification and, to a lesser extent, interpretation. In Chapter II (together with Appendix C.) the phenomenon of recurrence is viewed in general terms, that is to say schematically. An attempt is made to outline the recurrent skeleton of Contessa's tales which I have referred to, for want of a more concise phrase, as the "daemonic drive syndrome." In Chapter III an examination of the phenomenon of recurrence is carried out in specific terms. Particular aspects of the tales (themes and motifs) are isolated and discussed in such a way as to highlight their repetitive quality. In both chapters recurrence, whether seen generally or specifically, is approached through the medium of the characters. Thus this thesis seeks to be simultaneously a study of themes and motifs and of characters.

In the limited scope of these investigations certain repetitive features have had to be omitted. It was not possible to deal with the legend of the Riesengebirge in detail, even though it figures prominently in both Haushahn und Paradiesvogel and Das Schwert und die Schlangen. I was unable to trace the relevant secondary literature in the short time available to me; consequently I felt ill qualified to discuss this legend without first ascertaining to what precise extent Contessa was indebted to genuine Silesian folk-lore or how great a role his fertile imagination played in his conception of the giant race and its fate.¹ The artist-motif, dealt with adequately by Pankalla,² is also omitted. I have ignored conventional recurrent features common to many writers in many literary epochs, such as the problem of determinism and free-will, the deliberate confusion of identities and the happy end.

Of the secondary literature directly pertinent to Contessa's life and works listed in the selected bibliography, none but Pankalla's and Meyer's³ studies really deals in anything but generalities. Hewett-

¹Clarification could perhaps be found somewhere in the Silesian periodical, Der Wanderer im Riesengebirge (Zeitschrift des deutschen und des österreichischen Riesengebirgs-Vereins), whose only location in North America is the Library of Congress, where only part of the series is available (1880-1924).

²Gerhard Pankalla, Karl Wilhelm Contessa und E.T.A. Hoffmann. Motiv- und Form-Beziehungen im Werk zweier Romantiker (Würzburg, 1938), pp. 19-23.

³Hans P. Meyer, Die Brüder Contessa. Ihr Leben und ihre Werke (Berlin, 1906).

Thayer's article in Germanic Review attempts to be specific, but several careless errors render his scholarship suspect.¹ This means that, beyond the initial groundwork of classification laid in this thesis, the works of Wilhelm Contessa remain virtually unexplored. Therefore I suggest in a brief list some specific areas, other than those of my own sub-headings in this study, in which fruitful research might be carried out:

- (a) Religion and didacticism.
- (b) Possible Baroque influences.
- (c) Other literary influences.
- (d) Contessa's place in Silesian literature.
- (e) Connections with Hoffmann et al.
- (f) Relation to other minor figures of Romanticism.
- (g) Confusion of identities.
- (h) The Doppelgänger.
- (i) Style.
- (j) The dramas.
- (k) The lyrics.
- (l) Location of manuscripts.
- (m) Expansion of bibliographical data.
- (n) Expansion of biographical data.

Besides such specific studies, there is a pressing need for an exhaustive monograph on Wilhelm Contessa to replace Hans Meyer's never satisfactory and now clearly antiquated parallel study of the Contessa brothers.

¹Harvey W. Hewett-Thayer, "The Romanticism of Contessa," Germanic Review, XVIII (1943), 24-35. For a list of major errors, see above, p. 3.

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APPENDIX A.

CHRONOLOGY

- 19.8.1777 Born in Hirschberg i.R.
- 1793 Death of father, Christian Salice-Contessa.
- 1795 Enters Pädagogium der Frankeschen Stiftungen in Halle. First formal education. Friendship with Houwald.
- 1797 Brother Jakob Christian imprisoned for political activities. First poems.
- 1798 Leaves school in Halle. Enrolment at Erlangen University. Legal studies. Private study of literature and natural sciences. Meets Hitzig.
- 1800 Enrols at Halle University with Houwald. Meets Johanna Jahn (Hannchen). More lyrics. Journey to Switzerland and Paris.
- 1801 Death of mother, Johanna Elisabeth (née Mokwitz).
- 1802 Return to Halle. Marries Hannchen. Studies discontinued. Moves to Weimar. Der Brief ohne Adresse.
- 1803 Death of Hannchen. Lives in total seclusion. Manon. Der Gelehrte.
- 1804 Der Instinkt.
- 1805 Das Räthsel. Moves to Berlin. Meets Henriette Nauendorf.
- 1806 Der Talisman. Living with Henriette.
- 1807 Der Fündling.
- 1808 Marries Henriette. Der unterbrochne Schwätzer. Der Liebes-Zwist.
- 1809 Meister Dietrich. Ich bin mein Bruder.
- 1810 Birth of son, Karl (21.8). Magister Rösslein.
- 1811 Raimund. Die Ehen werden im Himmel geschlossen.
- 1812 Almenorade. Lebensharmonie. Der Orakelspruch.

- 1813 Haushahn und Paradiesvogel.
- 1814 Meets E.T.A. Hoffmann. Der Todesengel. Vergib uns unsre Schuld.
- 1815 Der schwarze See. Das Gastmahl. Contributions to Der Roman des Freiherrn von Vieren.
- 1816 Death of Henriette. Moves to Sellendorf. Das Schwert und die Schlangen. Das entschlossene Mädchen. Der Schatz.
- 1817 Das Bild der Mutter. Wer zuletzt lacht, lacht am besten. Der Liebhaber nach dem Tode.
- 1818-20 Meetings of the Serapionsbrüder.
- 1819 Die Schatzgräber. Journey to Silesia. Lengthy stay with Hoffmann in Warmbrunn.
- 1820 Ich bin meine Schwester. Die weisse Rose. Visit to Dresden.
- 1821-22 Das Quartettchen im Hause.
- 1821-23 Aus Herr Balthasars Leben.
- 1822 Moves to Neuhaus bei Lübben i.d. Niederlausitz. Illness. Death of Hoffmann.
- 1824 Accompanies son to Pädagogium in Halle. Return to Berlin for medical treatment.
- 1825 Last visit to Neuhaus (March). Last meeting with brother. Dies of consumption (2.6). Buried in Berlin.

APPENDIX B.

SALIENT PARALLELS BETWEEN THE ROMAN EN QUATRE
AND DAS BILD DER MUTTER

1. Chapter I of Der Roman des Freiherrn von Vieren¹ approximates roughly to Chapter I of Das Bild der Mutter² with fifty-six deviations noted by Rogge:

Ch. I of RF: Rogge,³ pp. 31-45
Ch. I of BdM: Schriften,⁴ VI, pp. 177-189
Rogge's notes: Rogge, pp. 236-240.

2. Chapter IV of RF (Georg's dream) approximates in part to part of Chapter III of BdM, up to the point where the latter contains Georg's vision of his mother, with thirty-five deviations noted by Rogge:

Ch. IV of RF: Rogge, pp. 66-75
Ch. III of BdM: Schriften, VI, pp. 199-206
Parallel (RF): Rogge, pp. 69-74
Parallel (BdM): Schriften, VI, pp. 199-204
Rogge's notes: Rogge, pp. 241-244.

3. Chapter VIII of RF approximates in part to part of Chapter II of BdM, from Georg's approach to the castle to the conclusion of the old count's ramblings, with twenty-eight deviations noted by Rogge:

Ch. VIII of RF: Rogge, pp. 99-110
Ch. II of BdM: Schriften, VI, pp. 189-199
Parallel (RF): Rogge, pp. 99-109
Parallel (BdM): Schriften, VI, pp. 191-197
Rogge's notes: Rogge, pp. 246-248.

¹Abbreviated RF.

²Abbreviated BdM.

³Ed. Helmuth Rogge, Der Doppelroman der Berliner Romantik (Leipzig, 1926), II.

⁴C.W. Contessa, Schriften, ed. E. von Houwald (Leipzig, 1826).

APPENDIX C.

TABLE OF THE PATTERN OF RECURRENCE

The table on the following page displays schematically the daemonic drive syndrome found in many of the narrative works of Wilhelm Contessa. This pattern is dealt with thoroughly in Chapter II; a summary can be found on p. 45. The four notations in the table are explained in the following key:

1. Because they involve unnatural death, both duelling and suicide are equated here with murder. This equation is well justified and reflected in Contessa's didacticism, since Catholic (Augustinian) moral theology teaches that it is as unlawful to kill oneself as to kill another man and that it is also unlawful to expose oneself needlessly to danger. Cf. Karl Hörmann, An Introduction to Moral Theology (London, 1961), pp. 188-189.

2. This is a negative reversal of the normally positive pattern. See above, pp. 33-34, 73-74.

3. This involves characters in Haselmeyer's first play.

4. This pattern emerges from Haselmeyer's second play.

TITLE	DAEMONIC DRIVE	OBSTACLE	CRIME ¹	INITIAL REDEMPTION	GUILT OR DEATH-WISH	OUTCOME
Manon	Passionate love of M. for Martinet	Martinet's madness and death	-	-	Death-wish fulfilled	Union in death with Martinet
Der Instinkt	Passionate love of E. for Angelika	Diethorst	Intended duel with Diethorst	Through Angelika's love (her voice)	-	-
Meister Dietrich	Passionate love of D. for Countess	1. Count 2. Grünrock	1. Murder of Count 2. Attempted murder of Grünrock	-	1. Flight 2. Death-wish fulfilled	Redemption through K.'s love in death
Magister Rösslein	[Devil incarnate]	Mathildis' cousin	Attempted drowning of cousin	-	[Flight]	-
Haushahn und Paradiesvogel	Infatuation of P. with Nachtigall	Caroline	Intended murder of Caroline	Through Caroline's love	Remorse	Redemption through parental love
Der Todesengel	Passionate love of W. for Maria	Trym	Murder of Trym	-	Flight [Entsagung]	Redemption through M.'s love in death
Vergib uns unsre Schuld	Passionate love of G. for Klara	Vollrad	Intended murder of Vollrad	Through Therese's love	Intended Flight [Intended Entsagung]	Redemption through death for loved ones
Der schwarze See	Infatuation of W. with Nixie	Fremder Jäger	Intended murder of Fremder Jäger	-	-	-
	-----	Gertrud	Intended murder of Gertrud	-	Intended Entsagung	-
	-----	Gertrud and Elisabeth	Intended murder of G. and E.	Through love of G. and E.	Remorse	Redemption through death for Elisabeth
	[Pure love of F.J. for Elisabeth] ²	Leuthold	Duel with L.	-	Entsagung	[Return to daemonic drive]
Das Schwert und die Schlangen	Power drive of Giselherr	Brothers	Murder of brothers	-	Persecution-mania [snakes]	Redemption through love
Das Bild der Mutter	Passionate love of brothers for stepmother ³	Father	Murder of father	-	-	-
	Passionate love of F. for Mathilde ⁴	Marchese	1. Suicidal mania 2. Intended duel with Marchese	1. - 2. Through Rosa-munda's love	Intended voluntary death	Redemption through parental and filial love

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